

January 12, 2017

The Hon. Pete Kelly
The Hon. David Wilson
The Hon. Kevin Meyer
The Hon. Shelley Hughes
The Hon. Bryce Edgmon
The Hon. Ivy Spohnholz
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express the critical need for policy that allows for the substitution of biologics with biosimilars and ensures prescriber and pharmacist communication throughout a patient's treatment process. Biologic medicine legislation is an opportunity for Alaska to do what is right, by creating a pathway that facilitates a patient's access to affordable treatment options while ensuring a patient's doctor has accurate medical records through pharmacist communication.

Biologics are a class of medication that treat diseases like cancer, arthritis, lupus, and other autoimmune conditions. These medicines are uniquely complex, as they are made with living cells that work to relieve a patient's symptoms by targeting a disease at its source and providing much-needed relief to millions of patients. Now, similar versions of biologics called "biosimilars" have emerged on the market, making this level of treatment accessible to a wider range of patients.

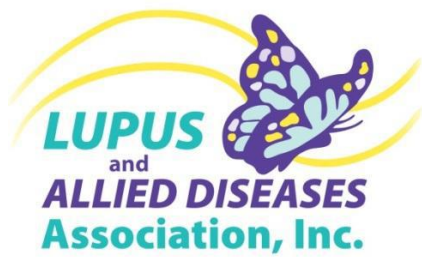
It is important to know that biosimilars are not the same as generic medicines – which is the reason we need legislation. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) determines the interchangeability of biologic products, while each state governs the substitution policies. Presently, four biosimilars have been approved by the FDA, with many more in the pipeline. Without updated legislation, Alaska pharmacists will lack the authority to substitute biologics deemed interchangeable by the FDA. Patients and their doctors need a safe and transparent process by which they can receive access to their medications and pharmacists need a firm standard for substituting biologic products with those that the FDA has deemed interchangeable.

Currently, 26 states and territories have passed biosimilar legislation.

We encourage the Alaska State Legislature to be among the states that bring affordable access to innovative medical treatment options to all Alaskans. On behalf of the undersigned patient and physician organizations, we hope to see this important legislation introduced in the legislative session.

Thank you for your consideration.

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