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February 3, 2017

Senator Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee

Senator David Wilson
Chair, Senate Health & Social Services Committee

Alaska State Capitol
4th Ave and Main Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for SB 32

Dear Chair Costello and Chair Wilson,

On behalf of the American Liver Foundation and the millions of Americans who face the daily struggles of liver disease, we respectfully urge you to support SB 32. This bill updates current Alaska law to allow for the substitution of interchangeable biologic products at the retail pharmacy once they have been approved by the FDA. 26 states have passed similar biologic substitution legislation, which is necessary to allow for the retail substitution of these products.

Treatment of all forms of liver disease requires a great deal of clinical judgment. What works for one patient doesn't always work for another. The physician is in a unique position to consider the needs of individual patients, factoring in disease duration and severity, prognosis, treatment history and response, risk for adverse events, co-morbidities and potential impact on quality of life. It is to this end, that inappropriate therapy substitutions can result in disease progression and long-term consequences.

Biosimilars represent a new generation of drugs in liver and gastrointestinal diseases. Interchangeability, automatic substitution and switching are key issues to consider for safety and efficacy when treating patients with biosimilars in clinical practice. Given the importance of the specific needs of each individual patient and the distinct differences between biologics and biosimilars, we believe that proper communication between pharmacists and physicians is crucial to patient care to ensure that patients are receiving the best treatment as prescribed by their physicians.

SB 32 will also increase access to lower cost drugs for patients who rely on these medicines to treat serious and chronic diseases. SB 32 supported by many Alaskan patient and physician groups.

In order to protect Alaska's patients, the American Liver Foundation strongly supports SB 32, which includes language regarding prescriber communication. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this legislation. Thank you for your support in considering this important legislation. Please contact Jonathan Martin, National Director of Programs at (646) 737-9403, should you require any additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Thomas F. Nealon, III'.

Thomas F. Nealon, III
CEO and Board Chairman
American Liver Foundation

CC: Members, Senate Medical Affairs Committee

Members, House Medical, Military, Public & Municipal Affairs Committee