



The Honorable Senator David Wilson
Chair, Senate Health & Social Services Committee

The Honorable Senator Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee

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

February 3, 2017

Re: U.S. Pain Foundation Supports Alaska Senate Bill 32

Dear Senators Wilson and Costello:

Currently, there are more than 100 million Americans who suffer from chronic pain, including several in Alaska. On behalf of all Alaska residents who suffer from chronic pain, the U.S. Pain Foundation respectfully urges you to support SB 32, which includes prescriber communication.

We applaud the cost benefits that might occur from biosimilars; however, substituting a biosimilar or an interchangeable biological product without informing the prescriber could be detrimental to patient safety. Biosimilars are biological medicines that are produced by living cells for the prevention, treatment or cure of a disease. The U.S. Pain Foundation supports strong patient protections and transparency relative to state legislation for the substitution of biosimilars, such as SB 32. By securing effective biosimilar substitution laws, Alaska can increase access to this new age of medicines and do it in a safe, reliable and consistent way for patients and physicians.

Treatment of chronic pain requires a great deal of clinical judgment. Sometimes treatments that work for one patient with a chronic disease do not work for another. The physician must take into consideration the needs of each individual patient, factoring in many different variables that can affect a patient's treatment options. Therefore, inappropriate therapy substitutions can result in disease progression and long-term consequences. Since biosimilars differ from generics, they are not identical to their biologic counterpart. While generics can be interchanged for a brand-name drug because their basic compounds are matching, biologics and biosimilars are not identical and should not be treated as such. It is feasible that a patient could have a different reaction to a biosimilar than he/she would with its original biologic.

Given the importance of the specific needs of each individual patient and the distinct differences between biologics and biosimilars, we believe that communication between pharmacists and physicians is crucial to patient care to ensure that patients are receiving the best treatment as prescribed by their physicians.

On behalf of the U.S. Pain Foundation and the millions of Alaska residents and Americans who face the daily struggles of debilitating diseases, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation. We strongly urge you to support SB 32, which includes prescriber communication and helps to protect patient safety.

Please contact Shaina Smith should you require any additional information or clarification. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shaina Smith

Shaina Smith

Director of State Advocacy & Alliance Development, U.S. Pain Foundation

Cc: Members, Senate Health & Social Services Committee
Members, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee

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