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SB 32 Interchangeable Biological Products

Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 32 allows for Alaskans to have access to safe, new, and effective treatment options called interchangeable biological products. Under current state law, pharmacists are allowed to substitute a generic product for drugs that are identical to their proprietary product, but cannot do the same with interchangeable biological products. Under SB 32, pharmacists will be able to dispense an FDA approved interchangeable product as a substitute for the proprietary biological product.

Due to the complexity and nature of biological products, an exact replication of these drugs is impossible, so a new category of interchangeable products was created by the FDA. This category of drug allows for pharmaceutical companies to create safe and affordable substitutes for drugs that help treat conditions including cancer, multiple sclerosis, severe rheumatoid arthritis, heart disease, and other immune system, neurological and hematologic disorders.

In addition to the clear benefits to patients, the lower costs and competition should also bring measurable costs savings to Alaska's Medicaid program and budget. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services recommends that state Medicaid programs "view the launch of biosimilar biological products as a unique opportunity to achieve measurable cost savings and greater beneficiary access to expensive therapeutic treatments for chronic conditions."

SB 32 allows pharmacists to dispense interchangeable biological products if they communicate this with the prescribing doctor. This bill only allows a pharmacist to substitute an interchangeable product if it is approved by the FDA, and it allows for doctors to require the pharmacist to only dispense the proprietary product if they feel it is a more effective option. Patient consent will also be required before any substitution is made for an interchangeable over the proprietary product.

It is important for Alaska to address this issue now as more interchangeable products become available to patients. Senate Bill 32 will allow for new and effective options at a lower cost, without jeopardizing patient safety, and will allow for measurable Medicaid and budget savings for the State. Please join in supporting access to an affordable medication option for Alaskans.

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