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February 26, 2015

Maryland State Senate Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support of SB 537 (Conway) – Pharmacists – Substitution and Dispensing – Interchangeable Biological Products

Dear Senators:

The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO) is a national organization composed of 30 state and regional professional rheumatology societies formed in order to advocate and ensure excellence and access to the highest quality care for patients with rheumatologic and musculoskeletal disease.

Rheumatologists are on the forefront of utilizing the dramatic long-term, life-changing clinical improvements that biological products have on Americans. Biological products available for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases have had a significant impact on improving our patients' quality of life, preventing disability, and lowering mortality.

As the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee considers SB 537 (Conway), CSRO wishes to convey its support for the legislation.

This bill provides important pathways for medication access, while requiring much needed patient safety rules for dispensing pharmacists to notify physicians of biosimilar substations within 10 days. Requiring notification within 10 days provides physicians a consistent window to understand and counter any adverse effects of medications.

With upcoming FDA approval expected this year, interchangeable biological products will continue to be an important issue for rheumatology patients. CSRO supports safe introduction of biosimilars into the practice of medicine and urges passage of SB 537.

Sincerely,



Michael Schweitz, MD
President
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations