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April 29, 2015

The Honorable Scott M. Simon
Chairman, House Health and Welfare Committee
900 North Third Street
Baton Rouge LA, 70804

Re: Support House Bill 319 (Simon) – Drugs/prescription: Relative To The Dispensing Of Interchangeable Biological Products

Dear Representative Simon and Members of the Committee:

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, autoimmune, 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 your committee considers HB 319 (Simon), CSRO wishes to convey its support for this important legislation.

This bill provides important pathways for medication access, while requiring much needed patient safety rules for dispensing pharmacists to communicate with physicians about biosimilar substitutions within 5 days. Requiring communication within 5 days provides physicians a consistent window to understand and counter any adverse effects of medications.

With the FDA approval in March of the very first biosimilar drug, biological products will continue to be an important issue for rheumatology patients. CSRO supports safe introduction of biosimilars into the practice of medicine in Louisiana and urges passage of HB 319.

Sincerely,



Michael Schweitz, MD
President
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations