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COALITION OF STATE RHEUMATOLOGY ORGANIZATIONS

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April 19, 2016

Re: Support of HB 505 (Huffman) –Biological products regulate/pharmacist substitution.

Dear House Health and Aging Committee Member:

The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations is a national organization composed of over 30 state and regional professional rheumatology societies formed in order to advocate for excellence in rheumatologic care and to ensure access to the highest quality care for patients with rheumatologic and musculoskeletal disease. Rheumatologists are entrusted with the safe care of patients with rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases that require the careful choice of safe and effective pharmaceutical and biological therapies.

Rheumatologists are keenly aware of the dramatic long term, life changing clinical improvements that biological agents have on some of the most crippling and disabling conditions that affect Americans. These biologic response modifying agents are available for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases and have a significant impact on improving our patients' quality of life, preventing disability, decreasing morbidity and lowering mortality.

As the Ohio Health and Aging Committee consider HB 505, CSRO wishes to convey its support. Importantly, the bill provides a prescriber may instruct the pharmacist not to substitute an interchangeable biological product in lieu of a prescribed biological product by including "Dispense as Written" (DAW) on a prescription.

Additionally, the bill installs safeguards to patient access by ensuring they are alerted when a substitution occurs and that the information about the substitution is clearly stated on the label of the prescription container. These protections make certain that the patient is being treated safely and effectively.

CSRO recognizes that follow-on biologic products are a natural evolution of biotechnology and we welcome the introduction of these medications. However, we must insist that physicians know what medicine their patient receives and that the prescribing physician is notified in a timely manner whenever a patient's biologic medicine is substituted.

Biologics, and soon interchangeable biological products, will continue to be an important treatment option for rheumatology patients. CSRO appreciates that HB 505 supports safe introduction of biosimilars into the practice of medicine and urges its passage.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Stevens, MD

Michael Stevens, MD
President
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations