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April 7, 2015

The Honorable Ross Hunter
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
315 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Oppose Amendment 01-5935 AMH APP BLAC 079 (Cody / Schmick) – Prescription of biological products and interchangeable biological products

Dear Chairman Hunter and Members of the House Appropriations 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.

As the House Appropriations Committee considers amendments to ESB 5935:

CSRO wishes to convey its strong OPPOSITION to Amendment 1 (Cody / Schmick).

This amendment effectively cancels out the important work done in conjunction with pharmacists, physicians, and patient advocates in the Senate to create a safe and effective environment for the introduction of biosimilars into Washington State.

If approved, this amendment would change the important physician notification requirement into a useless entry into an undefined pharmacy benefit management system. Without actual notification, a physician has no way of knowing when substitution has dispensed, or if a record has been updated.

This amendment would also further cloud the important tracking and understanding of medication by removing information provided to patients and allowing the use of a national drug code in the entry.

The result of these changes would make it much more difficult for physicians to track medications and their effects. This decreases patient safety as it can delay physician knowledge and response in the event of an adverse medical reaction, and makes it more difficult to track clinical effects of these new medications.

CSRO recognizes that follow-on biologics and biosimilars are a natural evolution of medications and with the FDA approval of the first biosimilar this March, we welcome the important consideration of ESB 5935. At the same time, we must insist that patient safety remain the most important concern and request all legislation on biosimilars allow physicians to quickly and correctly know what medicine their patient receives.

Sincerely,



Michael Schweitz, M.D.
President, CSRO