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February 18, 2015

The Honorable David Shafer
President Pro Tempore
Georgia State Senate
321 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Re: Support of SB 51 (Burke) – Pharmacists and Pharmacies; provide for substitutions of interchangeable biological products

Dear Senator Shafer:

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 especially aware of the dramatic long-term, life-changing clinical improvements that biological products have on some of the most disabling conditions that affect 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 Georgia House Health and Human Services Committee considers SB 51 (Burke), CSRO wishes to convey its support. This bill provides important pathways for medication access, while also requiring much needed patient safety rules for dispensing pharmacists to communicate changes to a patient's medication within 48 hours.

Especially of note in this legislation, is the communication requirement which emphasizes the importance that prescriber notification has on protecting patients in Georgia who utilize biological products. Requiring communication within 48 hours gives physicians a safe and 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 appreciates that SB 51 supports safe introduction of biosimilars into the practice of medicine and urges its passage.

Sincerely,



Michael Schweitz, MD
President
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations