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February 26, 2015

Oregon State Senate Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support of SB 147 – Changes communication requirements for pharmacy or pharmacist that substitutes biological product.

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 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 Senate Committee on Health considers SB 147, CSRO wishes to convey its support for the premise of the legislation.

We would also like to emphasize the critical importance communication to a prescriber has on patient safety. As currently written, SB 147 calls for a communication period to be "within a reasonable time." Requiring prior communication before a prescription is filled, or a specific communication period shortly after, offers physicians a safer and more consistent window to understand and counter any adverse effects of medications. We ask that the communication provision be amended to define a set time period.

CSRO recognizes that follow-on biologics and biosimilars are a natural evolution of medications and as the FDA is expected to approve the first biosimilar drugs this year, we welcome this important update to Oregon's existing law. 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 know what medicine their patient receives.

Sincerely,



Michael Schweitz, MD
President
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations