



November 25, 2019

Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO) is a group of state and regional professional rheumatology societies formed in order to advocate for excellence in rheumatologic disease care and to ensure access to the highest quality care for the management of rheumatologic and musculoskeletal diseases. Our coalition serves the practicing rheumatologist in charge of patient care for these illnesses. We are writing to express concern with an amendment added to HR 3 as reported out of the Energy and Commerce Committee and to urge you not to include this language in the final version of the bill or in any continuing resolution.

During the Energy and Commerce Committee markup of HR 3, Congressman Schrader offered an amendment to increase the six percent add-on to average sales price reimbursement for biosimilars to eight percent for the first five years that a biosimilar is on the market. This increased reimbursement would apply retroactively to currently marketed biosimilars as well, by increasing payment for those products to 8% from 2020 to 2025.

While we completely support the use of biosimilars, as we have previously stated, we have objected to the notion that financial incentives influence prescribing by rheumatologists. The idea of physician prescriptions being based solely on profitability is condemned by legislators, regulators, and the rheumatology community. Yet this is exactly what the amendment attempts to accomplish.

Even putting aside these concerns, we wanted to ensure that lawmakers are aware of recent developments in the rheumatology drug market. Over the last few years, we have begun to see a functioning biosimilars market: the price of one of the leading treatments for rheumatoid arthritis has dropped by 26% since January 2018. This downward pressure on pricing is the direct result of two biosimilars for that product being introduced into the marketplace. Clinical concerns and out of pocket costs for the patient are the most important factors as the patient and physician work together to determine the best treatment option.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose inclusion of the Schrader amendment in HR 3 or any other legislation. Thank you for considering our viewpoints. Please let us know if you have questions or would like any additional information.

Sincerely,
Dr. Michael Schweitz
Chairman, CSRO Federal Advocacy