

February 20, 2017

The Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
115 State Street, Room 17
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: Biosimilar Legislation

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express the critical need for policy that allows for the substitution of biologics with biosimilars and ensures prescriber and pharmacist communication throughout a patient's treatment process. Biologic medicine legislation is an opportunity for Vermont to do what is right, by creating a pathway that facilitates a patient's access to affordable treatment options while ensuring a patient's doctor has accurate medical records through pharmacist communication.

Biologics are a class of medication that treat diseases like cancer, arthritis, lupus, and other autoimmune conditions. These medicines are uniquely complex, as they are made with living cells that work to relieve a patient's symptoms by targeting a disease at its source and providing much-needed relief to millions of patients. Now, similar versions of biologics called "biosimilars" have emerged on the market, making this level of treatment accessible to a wider range of patients.

It is important to know that biosimilars are not the same as generic medicines – which is the reason legislative action is needed. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) determines the interchangeability of biologic products, while each state governs the substitution policies. While a handful of biosimilars are currently approved by the FDA, we expect many more to emerge in the future. Without updated legislation, Vermont pharmacists will lack the authority to substitute lifesaving and cost-saving biologics deemed interchangeable by the FDA. Patients and their doctors need a safe and transparent process by which they can receive access to their medications and pharmacists need a firm standard for substituting biologic products with those that the FDA has deemed interchangeable.

Currently, 26 states have passed biosimilar legislation.

We encourage the Vermont Senate, by way of legislation, to bring affordable access to innovative medical treatment options to all Vermonters. On behalf of the undersigned patient organizations, we hope to see this important legislation approved during this session.

Thank you for your consideration.



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Arthritis Foundation



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