



American Autoimmune

Related Diseases Association, Inc.

www.aarda.org

A nonprofit association bringing a national focus to autoimmunity, the major cause of chronic disease

March 12, 2016

The Honorable Greg Stumbo
Speaker of the House
Kentucky House of Representatives

The Honorable Jeff Hoover
Minority Floor Leader
Kentucky House of Representatives

Re: **Support SB 134 – Biologics**

Dear Speaker Stumbo, Leader Hoover and Members of the House of Representatives:

On behalf of the American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA), a national not for profit health organization, we are writing to request that you **support SB 134** regarding the pharmacy substitution of biosimilar medical products. As patient advocates, we are often the first place newly diagnosed patients come for help and information. Until one decade ago, the treatment choice for most autoimmune diseases was cortical steroids which had significant side effects for the patient. The use of biologics have made a significant impact on improving the lives of patients with serious and life threatening autoimmune diseases such as Crohn's disease, lupus, multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis. Biosimilars hold much promise in expanding access to better treatments.

"Copies" of these medicines, called "biosimilars" have the potential to provide these therapies at a reduced cost. Yet unlike generic versions of chemical drugs, biosimilars are not exact duplicates of their reference products. Indeed, the complexity of biologics and their proprietary manufacturing processes mean that these "copies" can only ever be similar, never the same. Even the smallest structural difference between a biologic and its attempted copy can have a significant impact on a patient. Therefore, the issue of interchangeability has been a new challenge for policymakers.

AARDA believes that when interchangeable biosimilar products are substituted, communication between patients, pharmacists, and health care providers is essential to patient care. We fully support SB 134 and are concerned that patient safety will be compromised if this legislation is not enacted. It is our view that this bill appropriately reflects the importance of pharmacist-physician communication and keeping treatment decisions the purview of the physician and patient, without posing undue or onerous burdens upon the pharmacist.

SB 134 will extend these valuable protections to Idaho's patients while increasing their access to biologic therapies.

Thank you in advance for taking support the necessary steps to keep patient safety a priority in Kentucky by supporting SB 134.

Sincerely,

Virginia Ladd
President