

October 3, 2014

The Honorable Mike Turzai
Majority Leader
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
110 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable William Adolph Jr.
Majority Chair, Appropriations Committee
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
245 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Frank Dermody
Democratic Leader
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
423 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Joseph Markosek
Democratic Chair, Appropriations Committee
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
512E Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Support for Senate Bill 405

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of the more than 50 million Americans, including the 2,794,000 adults and 11,500 children in Pennsylvania, with doctor-diagnosed arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation is asking for your support of Senate Bill 405 and a “Yes” vote for its passage out of the Appropriations Committee.

The bill contains an important provision that requires communication from the pharmacist to the physician in instances of substitution of a biologic medication with a biological product. This bill does not require the pharmacist to search-out or track-down the prescriber before dispensing - the communication occurs only AFTER dispensing the medication.

It is significant to note that the communication to the physician is not complex or arduous – it only requires making an entry in the electronic health record of the patient, where available. The Arthritis Foundation believes that this record keeping is critical to patient safety should any adverse reactions occur.

Treatment of autoimmune and inflammatory types of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile idiopathic arthritis require a great deal of clinical judgment. What works for one patient doesn’t always work for another. The physician communication requirement is essential because he or she is in a unique position to consider the needs of individual patients, factoring in disease duration and severity, prognosis, treatment history and response, risk for adverse events, co-morbidities and potential impact on quality of life. Inappropriate therapy substitutions can result in disease progression, permanent joint destruction and long-term consequences.

The Arthritis Foundation’s support of the legislation is contingent upon a requirement that the physician receive a communication from the pharmacist after the substitution of a biological product. If the physician communication provision of the bill were to be altered or removed, it would result in the disruption of the patient-physician relationship and put patient safety at risk.

On behalf of the Arthritis Foundation and the people who face the daily struggles of this debilitating disease, we appreciate the opportunity to support this important legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandie G. Preiss". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sandie Preiss
Vice President, Access and Advocacy
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