

# Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America®

## NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

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February 27, 2009

Senator Jonathan Harris, Chair, Public Health Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000  
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Hon. Elizabeth Ritter, Chair, Public Health Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000  
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

### **Re: Raised Senate Bill No. 1049– AN ACT PROHIBITING CERTAIN GIFTS FROM PHARMACEUTICAL AND MEDICAL DEVICE COMPANIES TO HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS**

Dear Senator Harris and Representative Ritter,

On behalf of the Individuals and families who live with asthma and allergies I want to express my concerns with the bill referenced above. I believe there may be unintended consequences of this section which could adversely impact health related agencies such as mine, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America New England Chapter. I also feel that this section is unnecessarily strict and appears to assume that the relationships between medical professionals and pharmaceutical company employees are, by their very nature, dishonest.

Additionally, I think it is insulting to these medical clinicians and pharmaceutical sales representatives to suggest that the offer of a cup of coffee or lunch, a common practice for sales people in any field, would be seen as a bribe and must be ended by legislation. I am certain that most of us have enough trust in our physicians to believe that they use their best clinical judgment to treat our ailments and would not be persuaded by any gift, regardless of value, from a pharmaceutical representative.

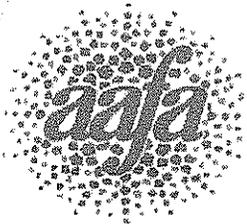
We are very aware of the need for Connecticut residents to be able to access the best health care at a reasonable cost. However, this section has little to do with health care cost containment.

AAFA New England receives contributions and grants from pharmaceutical companies. Sometimes they are given as a donation to our annual fundraiser. Other times they are grants to provide specific services that will benefit Connecticut residents suffering from asthma and allergies.

Like many small non-profits, we often organize educational programs or workshops for medical providers and patients. We believe that this bill might prohibit clinicians from both presenting and attending these programs if our organization receives grants from pharmaceutical companies. Also, like most other health related non-profit organizations, we work in partnership with physicians and nurses to help patients manage their diseases. Many of these providers volunteer their time as members of the Board of Directors or as consultants and speakers. It has been suggested that these providers would have to disaffiliate with the organization if this bill passes for fear of being in violation of the legislation. Small agencies like mine would have great difficulty finding other donors to replace the pharmaceutical companies and may as a result have to close.

Since it is not clear whether or not this bill intends to result in these specific situations, I believe that most medical clinicians will keep their distance from these situations so they are not perceived to be violating the law. I think that this very aggressive approach will have unintended consequences that will hurt Connecticut residents and therefore will embarrass its supporters.

Another likely unintended consequence would be the immediate end to continuing medical education. Since these critical programs are expensive to organize and run, the agencies, hospitals and foundations that offer high quality professional education generally seek financial assistance from pharmaceutical companies. There are no other logical funding sources for this necessary education



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In summary, I am afraid this bill creates two misperceptions: that clinicians are easily led and that pharmaceutical sales people, like their counterparts in every other sales field are corrupt. And, I am concerned that the fallout from this section will result in diminishing the health care resources available to help Connecticut residents.

Generally this bill addresses other concerns about health care in a serious manner. If the House believes the relationships between pharmaceutical representatives and clinicians raises concerns that need to be addressed, then I respectfully hope that those issues be considered in a thoughtful manner, and not by an approach that is so broad that it criminalizes any gift of any value.

I would happy to speak with you or your staff about the section and my concerns.

Sincerely,

Elaine Erenrich Rosenberg  
Executive Director

CC: Human Services  
Insurance & Real Estate Committee