



NEW ENGLAND REGION

serving Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire Rhode Island & Vermont

35 Cold Spring Road, Suite 411
Rocky Hill, CT 06067-3166
TELEPHONE: (860) 563-1177
TOLL-FREE: (800) 541-8350
FAX: (860) 563-6018
EMAIL: infosne@arthritis.org

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The Honorable Carlo Leone and David Baram, Co-Chairs, and Members
General Law Committee
Room 3500, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

PROPOSED HB 6918 – An Act Concerning Changes to Prescription Drugs Dispensed to Certain Patients

Testimony

Senator Leone, Representative Baram and Member of the General Law Committee

I am Susan Nesci, Vice President for Advocacy for the Arthritis Foundation in New England. The Arthritis Foundation supports the concept of HB 6918 that people who are stable on a medication for a chronic or rare disease should not be forced to switch to another medication by their insurer for a non-medical reason without the consent of the prescribing practitioner.

We are particularly concerned about non-medical switching for those on biologic medications for complex chronic conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis or certain cancers. In rheumatoid arthritis, for example, we do not yet have biomarkers that would help tell practitioners which patients would respond best to which medications. The work of Jackson Labs in Farmington will hopefully help us solve this puzzle. Rheumatologists do, however, have validated measures to judge whether a medication is controlling inflammation and preventing joint destruction in a particular patient. Why is this important? Two-thirds of the patients on a biologic for rheumatoid arthritis will experience either temporary or permanent remission—where disease symptoms go away for several months or permanently.

We, therefore, support the practice in the bill that only a prescribing practitioner should be able to consent in writing to a change in medication and that consent should be a prerequisite to the pharmacist switching a medication.

Thank you for your consideration of this consumer protection bill.

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