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March 4, 2016

Senator Carlo Leone, Co-Chair
Representative David Baram, Co-Chair
General Law Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 3500
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: SB 313 – An Act Concerning Biological Products

Dear Senator Leone and Representative Baram:

The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO) is a national organization composed of approximately 35 state and regional professional rheumatology societies. CSRO formed by physicians to ensure excellence and access to the highest quality care for patients with rheumatologic, autoimmune, and musculoskeletal disease.

Rheumatologists are on the forefront of treatments for patients with autoimmune diseases. With the advent of biologic medications, we have been able to stop the progression of some of these diseases and avoid the development of life-long deformities. Biological products available for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases have had a significant impact on improving our patients' quality of life, preventing deformities and disability, and lowering mortality.

As your committee considers SB 313, CSRO wishes to convey its support for this important legislation.

This bill includes much needed patient safety rules for dispensing pharmacists to communicate with physicians about biosimilar substitutions within 5 business days. Requiring this communication as quickly as possible provides physicians an opportunity to counter and correctly report any adverse effects of medications.

With FDA approval of the first biosimilar drug last year, biological products continue to be of growing importance for rheumatology patients. CSRO supports the safe introduction of interchangeable biologic drugs into the practice of medicine in Connecticut and urges passage of SB 313.

Sincerely,



Michael Stevens, MD
President
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations