

TESTIMONY - STATE BIOSIMILAR SUBSTITUTION

**Utah House of Representatives  
Health & Human Services Committee**

*House Health & Human Services Committee consideration of HB 279*

**Speaker:**

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*Disclosure:*

*I have no disclosures to make regarding my travel here today. The Global Healthy Living Foundation accepts grants and charitable contributions from pharmaceutical companies, government, private foundations and individuals. We have received scientific briefings from pharmaceutical companies, as well as from our independent medical advisory board.*

Good afternoon. Chairman McIff, I'd like to thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Tabatha Yager. I grew up in the Salt Lake Valley and now live in South Jordan. The legislators that serve my community are Representative Cunningham and Senator Osmond. I'm here today representing myself, CreakyJoints, an arthritis support organization which is part of the Global Healthy Living Foundation, and other people in Utah who are, or will be taking biologics and biosimilars.

I currently take a biologic and I am here to speak in favor of House Bill 279. More specifically I support the notification requirements House Bill 279 contains because if physicians had not known exactly what drugs I was taking, including the name of my biologic, when I had a severe adverse reaction, I could have died. I do not have any memory of the first three days of when my adverse reaction occurred. On the fourth day, when my roommate found me unresponsive and I was rushed to the hospital, they had no idea what was wrong, and two days later, when my condition worsened even further, I was put into a medically induced coma for 14 days, due to progressive organ failure. The intensive care team taking care of me knew every drug I was taking and considered these drugs when they were saving my life.

So as you can see, in my mind this is not an argument reserved for corporations, their products, profits, or interests. It is an argument about people and what information we need in order to feel better, to control our chronic illness, and to stay alive when the worst happens.

I want to be very clear when I say that I am not here to talk about whether biosimilars should or should not be on the market or whether insurance companies should be able to influence what drug a patient takes. If a drug is approved by the FDA, I assume it is safe and effective. If my insurance company wants to switch a drug that the FDA says it can switch, I trust the FDA's decision and will take that drug. I am only asking that I, and my doctor, know what drug that is. I knew what drugs I was taking. My doctors knew what drugs I was taking. And that information helped save my life.

I also want to take a minute and address the pharmacists who are against this bill. You are the trusted link between me and my doctor. You should be on our side. You help in so many ways every day, whether it is making sure the medicine you dispense is the right dose with the right instructions. Whether it is the

time you take to help us understand how to take our medication and what the possible side effects are. Or, whether it is a simple and sincere smile when I pick up my drugs, even though I may not be feeling very well. You are the trusted face of my treatment. I think you should be telling these legislators that you support House Bill 279 and agree with the principle of patients and physicians knowing what drugs we are taking. You already let us know of possible drug interactions with any other medications we take when prescribed a new medication. How hard is it to enter information into an electronic health record, that lets our physicians know our drug has been switched? How much better would you feel knowing that if the worst happened you did everything you could to make sure emergency room doctors had all the information they needed to make the right decisions that saved lives?

This is the first time I've spoken to legislators. It is very intimidating. But it is very important. As I look around the room I see people here who are dressed better than I am and who may speak better than I do, making a living speaking to legislators across the country. I'm not one of those people. I'm a Utah citizen who is alive today because my doctor and I knew what drugs I was taking. As patients we don't want to give that up. And as compassionate legislators, you can't let that happen.

GHLF and I urge the members of this Committee to support House Bill 279. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my remarks and I would be pleased to provide any further information that you may require. Thank you for your time and attention.