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May 19, 2015

Louisiana House of Representatives
900 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RE: **HB 319 – *Support***

Dear Representative,

The Global Healthy Living Foundation (GHLF) is a 501 (c)(3) patient group that works to improve the quality of life for people with chronic disease, often focusing on those least able to advocate for themselves. As a patient advocacy organization, GHLF represents more than 80,000 chronically ill patients, including your fellow Louisiana residents. Many of these individuals have rheumatoid arthritis, take biologics, and stand to benefit greatly from the addition of biosimilars.

I am writing you today to express our support for HB 319.

GHLF's focus is on improving the lives of patients with chronic illnesses through health care education and mobilization programs that stress the importance of diagnosis, early and innovative intervention, long-term lifestyle improvement and therapeutic compliance. As promising as these innovative drugs are, GHLF believes that assuring their safety and transparency in the substitution process should be of paramount concern.

HB 319 takes positive steps toward updating Louisiana law to cover biologics and interchangeable biosimilars in a way that protects patients. Unlike traditional chemical drugs, biologics are unique, complex structures made from living cells that are not easily replicated. A small change or difference in the biosimilar or biologic manufacturing process has the potential to adversely impact the patient.

There are two provisions in HB 319 that GHLF believes are key to ensuring patients' safety and needs are met in the best way possible:

- First, the bill requires a pharmacist dispensing an interchangeable biosimilar to notify the prescribing physician within five days by entry into an electronic health record (if available) or by other means including email, fax, or telephone.

- Second, the bill provides the prescribing practitioner the ability to prohibit substitution.

Inclusion of notification provisions in legislation regarding this class of medication are crucial to preserving the doctor/patient relationship as well as the integrity of medical records that are invaluable if there is an adverse event from using the drug.

In fact, on May 6th of this year one of the patient advocates in our community from Louisiana testified in support of HB 319. Katherine Macfarlane is a disabilities law professor at LSU and has lived with rheumatoid arthritis since she was a little over a year old. I have attached Kat's testimony before the Louisiana House of Representatives Health and Wellness committee for your reference.

If it is determined by the doctor and patient that an interchangeable biosimilar can be substituted for a biologic, or is the preferred treatment, it is obvious to healthcare providers, patients and, we think, the majority of legislators, that proper record keeping be in place in order to track any adverse events that may occur.

As patient advocates, it is our duty to ensure that physicians are in charge of the drugs prescribed and that patients are aware of what drugs they are taking. Patients and physicians are the primary individuals who report any adverse events that occur while on therapy. Adverse events can only be reported accurately if patients and physicians have received proper communication from a pharmacist about what medication has been dispensed. Patient safety is the top priority in the health care process and medical decisions must remain between a doctor and patient. We urge the passage of HB 319 because it introduces interchangeable biosimilars in a way that ensures the safety of patients and preserves the physician-patient relationship.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this legislation and would be pleased to provide any further information that you may require.

Sincerely,

Seth Ginsberg
President, Global Health Living Foundation

CC: Members, House Health and Welfare Committee