



March 19, 2013

The Honorable Curren Price
Chair, Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 4016
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 598 (Hill) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Price:

On behalf of the California Healthcare Institute (CHI), the statewide public policy association representing California's innovative life sciences sector – biotechnology, pharmaceutical, medical device and diagnostics companies, venture capital firms, research universities and institutes and its 275,000 workers – I am writing in support of SB 598, legislation which would update current law and allow pharmacists to substitute biologic medicines with a new and more affordable class of FDA-approved treatments called biosimilars.

Many of CHI's member companies work in the field of biologics. These cutting-edge medicines are used to treat patients who suffer from one or more serious chronic and often times debilitating and life-threatening illnesses. This new generation of treatments has transformed the health and lives of thousands of patients and has given them – and their families – hope for recovery.

In the next couple of years, *biosimilar* medications are expected to enter the U.S. healthcare market. Biosimilars are copies of an original biologic medicine and hold the promise of providing similar results as the original biologic at a lower price. However, unlike generic medicine, biosimilars are not structurally identical to the biologic products they seek to copy; thus the name biosimilar. Due to the sensitive nature of biologics, the slightest variation from the original biologic medicine can result in an immune response or other patient side effects. CHI represents companies responsible for making the original biologic and companies seeking to create biosimilars of these lifesaving medicines.

As important as these new therapies are to patients in California, it is just as important that public policy ensures the safety of the patients who rely upon them.

Specifically the bill would:

- Update California law to allow for greater patient access to life-saving, less costly, FDA-approved biosimilar medicines.
- Allow pharmacists to substitute a biosimilar for a brand biologic when the biosimilar is deemed interchangeable by the FDA.
- Require that a patient's physician is notified when a biosimilar medicine is substituted for a medication the doctor originally prescribed.
- Requires the Board of Pharmacy to keep a list on its website of interchangeable biosimilars.

SB 598 is a common sense bill to ensure patients have access to life-saving, lower cost, FDA-approved biosimilars. It also recognizes the importance of tracking and tracing the use of sensitive medicines in the event of an adverse patient reaction.

For these reasons, we strongly support SB 598.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eve Bukowski".

Eve Bukowski
Vice President – State Government Affairs

cc: Members, Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development