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February 17, 2017

Senator Claire Ayer

Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

Representative Bill Lippert

Chair, House Committee on Health Care

Vermont State House

115 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Chair Ayer and Chair Lippert:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Hispanic Medical Association, we urge you to vote yes for an act relating to interchangeable FDA-designated biological products.

This act authorizes a pharmacist to substitute an alternative biological product when filling a prescription for a prescribed biological product if the alternative biological products is designated as interchangeable with the reference product and communication is provided to the patient and physician that a substitution was made. The legislation would also require that the substitution of a biological product be communicated to the patient.

We recognize the rising use of biologics and biosimilars in our population now aging with increased chronic disease. Biosimilars go through an extensive review process and manufacturers are required to submit immense studies and data demonstrating a products' efficacy and ensuring it is safe for use by consumers. A pathway for biosimilar regulation in the U.S. was established as a provision of the 2008 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) and in 2012 the FDA issued draft guidelines for biosimilars and a list of biosimilars and interchangeable biological products.

In summary, the National Hispanic Medical Association recommends your support for this legislation before the end of session to clarify the procedures for biosimilar substitution for biologic treatments in a way that increases safety for the patient. We are especially supportive since this bill will provide increased access to quality treatment for Hispanics and all persons from Vermont with chronic diseases.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elena Rios'.

Elena Rios, MD, MSPH, FACP

President & CEO