

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

March 2, 2009

Senate Bill 1046

An Act Concerning Restricted Access to Prescription Drug Information

The Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) respectfully submits the following comments in opposition to Senate Bill 1046 relating to restrictions on disclosure of prescriber-identifiable prescription data. If passed, this bill would have the unintended consequences of negatively impacting patient safety, access to new innovative therapies, and efforts to research and develop biologic medicines.

BIO is a national trade organization, based in Washington, D.C., representing more than 1, 200 biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers, and related organizations worldwide. BIO members are involved in the research and development of healthcare, agricultural, industrial and environmental biotechnology products. In Connecticut, we work closely with the Connecticut United for Research Excellence an organization that represents more than 100 biotechnology companies, universities, academic institutions and others dedicated to advancing cutting edge research.

Patient care and safety will be at risk. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has promulgated regulations that either require or encourage pharmaceutical manufacturers to make direct contact with prescribing physicians under specific circumstances. If manufacturers are no longer able to access prescriber-identifiable prescribing information, patient care and safety will be at risk.

Under federal rules a manufacturer is responsible for notifying its affected direct accounts about a product recall. FDA guidance encourages manufacturers to provide this information in a timely manner to doctors. Prescriber-identifiable data facilitates this timely notification, minimizing patient risk and adverse events. Additionally, the FDA encourages the use of healthcare practitioner letters or training programs as a way to minimize risk. Without the ability to locate and directly contact physicians who prescribe their products, manufacturers will not be able to take advantage of this critical educational tool. Lastly, manufacturers need to contact prescribing physicians regarding important changes in drug packaging labels. Direct communication with a prescribing physician is necessary for manufacturers to notify physicians regarding significant health hazards.

These restrictions will negatively impact access to new innovative therapies. Although this legislation is aimed at consumer protection and provider privacy interests, enactment of this bill will have the unintended consequences of negatively impacting access to new innovative therapies and efforts to research and develop biologic medicines.

Small biotechnology companies generally do not have the same resources as large pharmaceutical companies to target physicians. Biotech companies rely on prescriber-identifiable data to locate physicians who treat a particular patient population or disease state that could benefit from access to their new treatments. Small biotech companies use prescriber-identifiable data to target their education and outreach activities to physicians who prescribe their products and to physicians whose practices are concentrated in specific analogous specialties (such as oncology or neurology).

Such targeted education and outreach activity permits small biotech companies to expand access to and use of specialized medications developed for the treatment of chronic and intractable diseases.

Since biologic therapies are often administered in the physician's office, it is imperative that biotech companies have a means for contacting physicians in order to provide them with information that furthers clinical knowledge and enhances clinical decision-making.

Research and development of biologic medicines is dependent on access to health information.

Access to health information, including prescriber-identified data, facilitates high quality research on appropriate treatments using biotechnology therapies. For small biotech companies, access to this information enhances efforts to research and develop new drugs and biologics. Drug development for biologic products is highly specialized. Unlike pill products, biotech products require specialized manufacturing facilities that are often times individually constructed for an individual product. Companies rely on pharmaceutical market studies, often including prescriber-identifiable data, to develop manufacturing capabilities that will meet consumer demand.

Additionally, biotech companies use prescriber-identifiable data¹ to facilitate enrollment in clinical trials. By targeting physicians who have patients in the targeted area of drug development, manufacturers can identify potential research sites and eligible patient populations for participation in trials. The State of Connecticut has currently 2,710 clinical trials in progress.

Patient privacy rights are not at issue in this debate. The confidentiality of patient-identifiable prescription data is protected under federal law pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996¹ (HIPAA). *Nothing in these state legislative vehicles enhances or further protects patient privacy.*

BIO supports the American Medical Association (AMA) opt-out program. The AMA has instituted a Physician Data Restriction Program (PDRP) to prevent access to physician prescribing information for those physicians who do not want their information shared. Nationwide implementation of the PDRP negates the need for a state-by-state patchwork of legislation to protect the privacy interests of physicians.

Senate Bill 1046 will only serve to impede the state's efforts to grow its life sciences industries.

This legislation is reactionary and would only serve to harm the state's reputation as a center of excellence for technology development – a reputation that has attracted, grown, and retained so many outstanding research organizations. BIO applauds the commitment Connecticut has shown to new technologies and research. Senate Bill 1046 could significantly undermine the state's leadership position in the life sciences.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of our concerns and encourage members to oppose Senate Bill 1046

Respectfully Submitted,

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State Government Relations

¹ Public Law 104-191. 45 CFR Parts 160 and 164.