

March 8, 2013

Health Care and Human Services Committee
Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Sen. Jeff Kruse, Vice Chair
Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Sen. Chip Shields
Sen. Tim Knopp

Submitted via email: sen.lauriemonnesanderson@state.or.us; sen.jeffkruse@state.or.us;
sen.elizabethsteinerhayward@state.or.us; sen.chipshields@state.or.us; sen.timknopp@state.or.us

RE: SB 165 – Out of Pocket Health Care Costs Cap Bill

The Arthritis Foundation, Great West Region is dedicated to serving nearly 4 million people living with doctor-diagnosed arthritis throughout our 8 state region, including 760,000 adults and 3,400 children with arthritis in Oregon. It is with this commitment to serve, and the patients' best interest in mind, that we write to voice our support for SB 165 and the need to protect affordable access to treatment for patients with conditions that threaten both their lives and livelihoods.

We believe that affordable access to appropriate therapies is of great importance in limiting and preventing disability in people with inflammatory arthritis. Biologic therapies that are now available to treat conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis and other similar conditions have significantly reduced the significant disability that was once a hallmark of these diseases which typically strike working age adults. These medications have no inexpensive generic equivalents and for many patients, these are the only option for getting their disease under control. Individuals unable to afford highly priced specialty drugs are likely to go without crucial medications, resulting in disability and other future expensive health complications.

While the Affordable Care Act makes make great strides in reducing the burden of out of pocket costs, there are still many more that worry about being able to continue on the therapies that keep them in medicated remission. By aligning regulations for plans outside the health insurance exchange, SB 165 can ensure an equitable marketplace. Spreading out-of-pocket maximums out across the year with a monthly limit provides additional predictability and assurance so that costs do not restrict or interfere with medically necessary use of medications.

We are heartened by the introduction of this bill and believe that it will enhance patients' access to the therapy that is best for their specific condition in order to limit pain and disability.

On behalf of the Foundation and those we serve in Oregon, we urge you to ensure that this bill moves forward and that discussion continues to find common ground in assuring that when treatment is deemed medically necessary, the cost of medications does not prevent patients from appropriate therapies.

Sincerely,



Scott Weaver
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*The mission of the Arthritis Foundation is to **improve lives** through **leadership** in the **prevention, control, and cure** of arthritis and related diseases.*