

March 13, 2015

Dear Members of the Oregon House Health Care Committee:

I am writing to comment on HB 2026 allowing a pharmacist to substitute a prescribed biological product with an FDA approved interchangeable biological product. Sandoz, the generic pharmaceuticals division of Novartis, is the world leader in developing, manufacturing and commercializing biosimilars, with more than 50% share in highly regulated markets. Our products are approved in more than 50 countries and to date have generated more than 200 million patient days' experience. And I am proud to say, we are the first company to have a biosimilar approved in the United States, which occurred on March 6, 2015.

We are committed to increasing access to these critical medicines for patients in Oregon and across the US, just as we have already done elsewhere. For example, use of a biologic medicine to prevent infections in cancer patients by boosting white blood cells increased by approximately 30% in Europe after the introduction of biosimilar competition.

While we are supportive of interchangeability, we would respectfully request that the Committee consider amending HB 2026 to include a provision on pharmacist to prescriber communication regarding the biological product dispensed.

Sandoz and its parent company Novartis, together with several other key organizations with extensive experience in the manufacturing and sale of biosimilars, support the introduction of equitable, consistent and procompetitive state-level legislation that paves the way for substitution of interchangeable biologics. We support a communication policy which relies on the growing adoption of interoperable electronic health records or electronic prescription records that allow a patient's health care team to communicate regarding a patient's medication history. In instances where electronic health records are not yet in place, pharmacist to prescriber communication will foster confidence in all biological medicines, including originator products, biosimilars, and interchangeable biologics.

We believe this reflects a pragmatic approach that involves an identical approach to all biologics, including interchangeable biologics. It also takes account of the fact that many prescribing physicians may actually favor this type of communication until they have seen how the interchangeable biologic market evolves in practice.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. And please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,
Candie Phipps
Director, State Government Affairs
Sandoz, a Novartis Company