

Written Testimony Kim Lowry, Arthritis Foundation, Great West Region  
**Regarding HB2026: *Relating to biological products***  
Before the House Health Care Committee, March 16, 2015

Representative Greenlick and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Kim Lowry, and I am a staff member with the Arthritis Foundation in Oregon. The Arthritis Foundation, Great West Region works on behalf of the 782,000 adults and 3,400 children in Oregon with doctor-diagnosed arthritis. We champion the fight to conquer the nation's leading cause of disability and find a cure for arthritis through life-changing information, advocacy, science and community. The Arthritis Foundation and many other patient groups oppose HB 2026.

For Oregonians with arthritis and other rheumatic conditions, **biologic products are life-changing treatments**. In many cases, they mean the difference between a lifetime of disability and full participation in work and civic life. But biologics are complex medications – and rheumatic conditions are complex diseases, requiring a high level of communication between all players on the healthcare team. **Individual patients can experience different reactions on different batches or preparations of current, branded biologic medications – and there is a great deal of variation between patients.**

Biosimilars are follow-on products that are similar to a reference biologic drug. The Food and Drug Administration will likely make a determination that some of these medications are “interchangeable biosimilars” – meaning that they are therapeutically very similar to – **but not the same as** - their reference product.

For patients who need biologic medications to control their disease, but who struggle to afford these therapies, biosimilars and interchangeable biosimilars offer hope for more affordable access to treatment. However, because these medications – and the diseases they treat - are very complex, and **interchangeable biosimilars are not the same as generics**, the Arthritis Foundation urges the Legislature to ensure that legislation adopted keeps patients' best interests at the forefront.

**Communication is needed when there is substitution of biologics.**

Patients need to know about changes before they take a medication – and they need to know their doctor knows too. Patients want the assurance that the information about precisely which medication is they take is made available to their doctor through the most efficient means possible. **In the plain language of the people we serve, I ask you to consider legislation around biosimilars with these questions:**

- **“Why wouldn't my doctor be informed if my medication is changed?”**
- **“Why wouldn't the pharmacy tell me if they change my medicine?”**

**When providers have all the information at hand, patients receive the best care.**

Communication from pharmacy to physician encourages providers to allow for substitution knowing they will be informed of changes and able to care for patients appropriately. Without communication, providers are not likely to allow for substitution. Some of the reasons for this are:

- **The prescribing physician needs to have complete and accurate information about substitutions to ensure quality care and maintain a complete and accurate medical record.** *Providers need to know precisely what product patients are given; without notice of a substitution or change of medication, the medical record is not complete.*

- **Accurate information about substitution must be given to providers to ensure patient safety in the short term and for the maintenance of an accurate medical record for pharmacovigilance purposes.** Adverse events can occur immediately as well as over the long-term; providers need to know what their patients are taking.

We urge you to consider first, and foremost the best interests of patients with complex conditions as you weigh the merit of HB 2026. Does it answer the questions patients are asking?

On behalf of the Arthritis Foundation and the 782,000 people in Oregonians with arthritis who we serve, I thank you for your consideration and ask you to oppose this legislation.