Global Healthy Living Foundation
515 North Midland Avenue
Upper Nyack, New York 10960 USA
+1 845 348 0400
+1 845 348 0210 fax
www.ghlf.org

Testimony before Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Committee on Health
September 11, 2013

As prepared for delivery

- Good morning. I would like to thank Chairmen Baker and Fabrizio and each of you on this committee for allowing me to be here today to provide the patient perspective on HB 746.

- I am here today on behalf of the Global Healthy Living Foundation, and the more than 56,000 members we represent nationwide, and the approximately 5,800 in Pennsylvania, to express our support for HB 746.

- We represent patients nationwide who are living with chronic illnesses. Our President, Seth Ginsberg, was diagnosed with Spondyloarthropathy, which is an inflammatory rheumatic disease, at age 13.

- Many of the patients we represent, including those with diabetes and Rheumatoid Arthritis, take biologics to manage their conditions.

- At the Global Healthy Living Foundation, our focus is on improving the lives of patients with chronic illnesses through health care education and programs that stress the importance of diagnosis, early and innovative medical intervention, long-term lifestyle improvement and therapeutic compliance.

- We work to advance new and improved medical treatments, such as biologics and biosimilars, for patients. As promising as these innovative drugs are, we believe that assuring their safety should be of paramount concern.

- We believe that HB 746 takes positive steps to update Pennsylvania law by covering biologics and biosimilars in a way that protects patients.

- Unlike traditional chemical drugs, biologics have very unique, complex structures made from living cells that are not easily replicated.

- The term biosimilars refers to new drugs and treatments that are similar – but not the same – as existing biologics.

- A small change in the biosimilar from the previously prescribed biologic has the potential to either dramatically help or adversely affect the patient.

- There are two provisions in HB 746 that GHLF believes are key:

    - First, the bill requires a pharmacist dispensing an interchangeable biosimilar in place of a biologic to notify the prescribing physician and patient.

    - Second, the pharmacy from which the interchangeable biosimilar was dispensed must retain a record of the substitution for at least 5 years.

- For patients, these two provisions are crucial. A determination that an interchangeable bioimilar is substituted for the prescribed

biologic should not be made without the knowledge of the patient and prescribing physician.

- We strongly support the use of biosimilars, but we believe that the choice of treatment should be decided only by patients and their physicians.

- If it is determined by the doctor and patient that an interchangeable biosimilar can indeed be substituted for a biologic, or is the preferred treatment in a particular case, it is important that proper record keeping be in place to track any adverse events that may occur.

- As patient advocates, safety is our top priority in the health care process.

- We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this topic and for taking the steps necessary to keep patients in Pennsylvania safe.

- The Global Healthy Living Foundation, and the patients we represent, urge the passage of HB 746 because it introduces biosimilars in a way that ensures safety and preserves the patient-physician relationship.

- We would be pleased to provide any further information that would be helpful to you as you move forward with this important legislation.