

January 16, 2024

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Committee on Education, Energy,
and the Environment
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Delegate Regina T. Boyce, Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Deputy Majority Whip
Committee on Education, Energy, and the
Environment
Public and Nonpublic Schools - Auto-Injectable
Epinephrine and Bronchodilators - Use,
Availability, Training, and Policies

RE: Public and Nonpublic Schools - Auto-Injectable Epinephrine and Bronchodilators - Use, Availability, Training, and Policies

Dear Senator Feldman, Delegate Atterbeary, Delegate Boyce, and Senator Hester and committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony. My name is Dr. Thomas Laudone, and I am a pediatric clinical pharmacist in the pediatric emergency department at University of Maryland Medical Center. Asthma is one of the most common chronic disease states in children and accounts for a high volume of emergency department visits among children in Baltimore.

I strongly support House Bill 86 and Senate Bill 180 as originally drafted as it will allow more immediate access to life saving medications for students suffering from an acute asthma exacerbation. Albuterol is a short-acting bronchodilator, given via inhaler with or without an attached spacer, and it works immediately to relax the smooth muscles around the small airways. This medication along with corticosteroids are considered the cornerstone of therapy for acute asthma exacerbations. Albuterol is the first medication administered to patients presenting to the emergency department experiencing respiratory distress secondary to asthma and these patients are typically in severe respiratory distress if they have not received breathing treatments prior to arrival. This group of patients are most at risk of further decompensating and could require higher oxygen support and more invasive interventions such as intubation. I personally have seen numerous patients brought into the emergency department from school via Emergency Medical Services in acute respiratory distress who after receiving intramuscular epinephrine and/or albuterol, improved significantly and did not require admission. Patients who did not receive early administration of albuterol will have a worse prognosis and almost always require admission for ongoing treatment.

House Bill 86 and Senate Bill 180 provide a simple and low-cost solution to treating asthma in children quickly and effectively at school to help prevent overall morbidity and decrease costs to the health system. One of our primary goals is to prevent emergency department revisits and hospital admission and readmission. One way of doing so is ensuring that patients with asthma have an albuterol rescue inhaler available to them at all times. As many as 80% of students with asthma don't have their albuterol inhalers at school. This would help alleviate that issue and make a life-saving medication readily

available for all students with asthma. Additionally, albuterol is safe, effective, easy to administer, and well-tolerated with very minimal side effects including transient increased heart rate and jitteriness. Asthma can be life threatening but if treated quickly and appropriately with albuterol, it is a very reversible disease with very good outcomes for the patient. Not all patients require admission to the hospital as well for an asthma exacerbation which helps decrease overall costs to the entire health care system.

I strongly believe albuterol should be readily available to any and all students with asthma as it very safe/well tolerated, highly effective, and easy to administer. To prevent further delays to implementing this safe, evidence-based practice in Maryland, I strongly support House Bill 86 and Senate Bill 180 and respectfully request your support of these Bills as well. I encourage quick action to move the bill out of committee and passage by the General Assembly to provide students across Maryland access to medication that can improve their overall outcome when experiencing a life-threatening asthma exacerbation at school.

Sincerely,

Thomas Laudone

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