



**House Committee on Ways and Means Hearing
on
Public and Nonpublic Schools - Bronchodilator Availability and Use - Policy (HB0609)
Maryland General Assembly
February 5, 2021**

My name is Charmayne Anderson, Director of Advocacy for Allergy & Asthma Network (“Network”), the leading national nonprofit dedicated to ending needless death and suffering due to asthma, allergies and related conditions. I am also a Maryland resident with asthma.

The Network supports bill HB0609, *Public and Nonpublic Schools - Bronchodilator Availability and Use - Policy (Bronchodilator Rescue Inhaler Law)*, which authorizes schools in the state of Maryland to purchase, acquire, and possess albuterol inhalers and disposable spacers for use by a trained employee or agent in an emergency for a student experiencing symptoms of respiratory distress. This legislation will help any student who either does not have their own medication available or experiences respiratory distress for the first time.

With more than 24 million Americans living with asthma, including 6 million children, asthma remains one of the most serious chronic diseases. Asthma is the number one reason that children and youth are absent from school. Approximately 3,600 Americans die each year from asthma and this chronic condition costs the U.S. healthcare system \$80 billion annually in direct healthcare expenditures (emergency department visits and hospitalizations) and indirect costs from lost productivity (missed school days and work days).

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend that schools develop and maintain comprehensive management plans to support children with lower airway disorders, such as asthma, and help control their disorders while in school. Most schools, unfortunately, do not maintain such plans and are ill-prepared for emergencies. This type of preparation and management in schools will not only improve a child’s health, but also ensure students are able to focus on learning while in school.

When the *Asthmatic Schoolchildren’s Treatment and Health Management Act* was signed into law in 2004, it led to legislation in all 50 states ensuring schoolchildren with asthma had the right to self-carry and administer their quick-relief bronchodilator inhaler at school. There is a movement in states across the country to pass laws or guidelines that standardize asthma management plans in schools and permit schools to stock emergency supplies of albuterol inhalers with a prescription and administer to a student believed to be in respiratory distress. Currently 14 states (Arizona, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and Virginia) have laws or guidelines in place. At the federal level, the *School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act* sponsored by House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (Maryland) was recently signed into law to encourage more schools around the country to put comprehensive asthma and allergy management programs in place and proper training of school staff.

In closing, Allergy & Asthma Network commends Maryland Delegate Regina Boyce for her leadership on this issue. We appreciate your consideration and hope this legislation becomes law.