



Testimony
Senate Committee on Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
on
Public and Nonpublic Schools - Bronchodilator Availability and Use - Policy (HB384)
Maryland General Assembly
April 5, 2022

Allergy & Asthma Network (“Network”), the leading national nonprofit dedicated to ending needless death and suffering due to asthma, allergies and related conditions **supports bill HB384 *Public and Nonpublic Schools – Bronchodilator Availability and Use***. This legislation 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 six 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 16 states (Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, 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) became law in January 2021 to encourage more schools around the country to put comprehensive asthma and allergy management programs in place by increasing federal grant preferences to states. The grant incentive comes by way of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's ("CDC") National Asthma Control Program ("NACP") which supports efforts in the states to track asthma prevalence, promote asthma control and prevention and build capacity in state and local health programs. Maryland was a CDC NACP grant recipient in 2013 and was approved for funding in 2014 but along with 12 other states including DC, it was not funded. Prior to 2013, 40 states were funded. Currently only [23 states including the City of Houston, TX and Puerto Rico](#) are funded. Together with other national asthma stakeholders, Allergy and Asthma Network is seeking increased funding in fiscal year (FY) 2023 for the NACP. With increased funding, the CDC hopes to expand the NACP to ultimately reach all U.S. states and territories. If this bill (HB384) becomes law, it will help position the state of Maryland for NACP funds in future grant rounds.

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. Thank you.