

HJM

Heidi McIntyre
3897 Midvale Rd. Tucker
Georgia 30084

The Honorable John Barrow
United States House of Representatives
213 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Opposing Follow-On Biologics

I am a thirty year plus Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) patient. At the age of 15 years I was disabled and devastated by the pain and limited future of this crippling disease. My joints were inflamed and painful leading to deformity and severe sickness. I lived in a rural area of the mid-west where treatment and diagnosis with specialists was limited. After a few years of 20 Aspirin per day, I degenerated to hand and feet deformities. I tried to continue to go to school, then college hoping for the day when there would be some treatment to eliminate my pain, fatigue, fevers and swelling. I could not continue at college and tried to work as much as I could. I was finally sent to an Arthritis specialist to help me get some relief. In 1998, I had a total hip replacement, still hoping for a medication of relief to avoid further joint deterioration.

Fortunately, in 2000, my rheumatologist prescribed a new type of medication from the DMARD category of drugs called Methotrexate. My doctor injected me every week. It helped for awhile but did not stop the painful disease of RA from advancing and threatening to damage my internal organs. In order to prevent this, my doctor prescribed a newer category of medications called biologics, specifically a drug called Enbrel. He injected me twice a week and I was taught to inject myself weekly. The injections were painful but I had hopes that it would help arrest the progression of my disease.

I have been very blessed that so far, eight years later, it is keeping me alive and more active with a quality of life I did not have before. I am very aware of the rigorous testing it takes for this type of serious drug to be available to patients. I know it went through many FDA trials, with great time and money spent for it to be safe for patients like me to take. I would not ever feel confident to take a follow-on biologic, that has not followed the safety and scientific regulations that the brand biologics promises. Please don't let anyone take a chance using follow-on biologics. The safety and potential negative effects of non-brand name biologics are too great.

Please I urge you to support HR 5629 and help all the patients like me who depend on these brand biologics to save our lives and continue our hope every day.

Sincerely,

Heidi J. McIntyre
Patient