

August 15, 2024

Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, Chair  
Assemblymember Kate A. Sanchez, Vice-Chair  
Assembly Committee on Appropriations  
1021 O Street, Suite 8220  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for SB 966**

Dear Chair Wicks and Vice-Chair Sanchez,

I am writing on behalf of the Association of Women in Rheumatology (AWIR) and all our California Chapters to express our strong support for California Senate Bill 966. This essential legislation addresses critical issues in drug pricing and healthcare landscape that directly impact the lives of our patients.

SB 966's requirement that 100% of drug manufacturer rebates be passed on as savings to patients represents a crucial step towards making medications more affordable. In our experience, patients living with rheumatic diseases often face exorbitant costs for vital medications, placing a heavy financial burden on them and limiting their access to necessary treatments. By ensuring that the financial benefits of drug rebates directly benefit the patients who need them most, this bill will improve health outcomes and alleviate some of the economic stress faced by vulnerable populations.

Additionally, the increased oversight and transparency for pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), by requiring licensure and reporting, will foster a more accountable system that prioritizes patient care. AWIR believes that stronger regulatory measures are essential to curbing practices that can detrimentally affect patient access to medications and overall health. The provisions that protect against patient steering reinforce our commitment to ensuring that patients have the freedom to choose the best healthcare options for their unique needs.

Reform in the structure of PBMs is urgently needed in California. As advocates for women in rheumatology, we recognize the unique challenges our patients face, and we firmly believe that SB 966 will contribute to a more equitable healthcare system. We urge the Assembly Committee on Appropriations to support this legislation and help pave the way for meaningful change.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We appreciate your commitment to improving healthcare access and outcomes for all Californians.

Respectfully,

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Vice President  
AWIR

Stephanie Ott, MD  
Advocacy Co-Chair  
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