March 11, 2014

Louisiana State Senate
Committee on Insurance

RE: Support of SB 165, HEALTH/ACC INSURANCE. Provides relative to prescription drug specialty tiers.

The Immune Deficiency Foundation (IDF) writes in support of SB 165, which helps ensure that every Louisiana resident has access to reasonable prescription drug benefits. SB 165 would prohibit the creation of specialty tiers that require the insured pay a percentage of the cost of a drug and sets a limit on patient cost-sharing in order to protect patients from unaffordable co-insurance fees.

Founded in 1980, IDF is the national patient organization dedicated to improving the diagnosis, treatment and quality of life of persons with primary immunodeficiency diseases (PI) through advocacy, education and research. Patients with primary immunodeficiency diseases are born with malfunctioning or nonexistent immune systems. As a result, they are prone to infections and illnesses from any kind of virus, bacteria or fungi.

Many of our patients are unable to produce antibodies necessary to fight disease. These patients require regular, lifelong treatments of immunoglobulin replacement (Ig) therapy to replace the antibodies their bodies do not naturally produce. Ig replacement therapy consists of a blood plasma product from pooled plasma donations. When Ig is infused on a routine basis, the antibodies in the donated plasma in essence act as a temporary immune system for our patients.

SB 165 is very important for Louisiana citizens who suffer from a PI, as patient financial responsibilities can mean the difference between receiving and not receiving needed medical treatments. For patients with PI who require Ig therapy, the co-insurance costs can amount to thousands of dollars per month for this complex, biologic treatment. Most families cannot afford to pay such large costs and instead go without care.

Without treatment, patients with PI will be ill more often, utilizing the health care system constantly and developing serious and severe co-morbidities and disabilities. The current situation isolates those with chronic conditions who need expensive therapies making their cost of care unaffordable, which is tantamount to a denial of care.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue, and we urge a favorable report for SB 165. Should you have any questions please contact Emily Hovermale, Director of Public Policy, at 443-632-2544 or at ehovermale@primaryimmune.org.

Regards,

Lawrence LaMotte
Vice President, Public Policy