

Testimony from
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI)
for the hearing of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Health
“Legislation to Improve Americans’ Health Care Coverage and Outcomes”
January 8, 2020

Chairwoman Eshoo, Ranking Member Burgess, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on H.R. 2468, the “School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act,” introduced by Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Rep. Phil Roe, M.D. (R-TN). This important, bipartisan legislation would encourage elementary and secondary schools receiving asthma-related grants to have trained personnel and a comprehensive school-based allergies and asthma management program.

The two most important strategies for preparing schools in the event of an allergy or asthma incident are implementing management plans and ensuring school staff members are ready to assist children experiencing an attack. The “School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act” would encourage states to adopt these strategies so that schools are better equipped to help students with severe allergies and asthma manage their disease. Such changes in schools will not only will improve child health but will also help students to better focus on learning in the classroom.

Over six million American children have asthma, a disease that is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism. According to the National Asthma Education and Prevention

Program, parents report that students miss 14 million days of school every year due to asthma. While asthma poses serious health and educational threats, with proper treatment and care, asthma can be controlled and does not have to negatively impact a student's access to education.

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommend that schools have comprehensive management plans in place to support children with asthma and ensure that their disorders are under control while at school. Unfortunately, most schools do not have such programs in place. An asthma action plan outlines what medications to take and when and how to increase the doses or add more medication if needed in the case of an asthma attack. If a school does not have an asthma action plan for a child, there is little they can do when that child suffers an asthma attack. They cannot provide medication, even if they have it, without parental authorization. An asthma action plan based on communication with the student's physician enables a school nurse or other designated school staff member to administer a rescue inhaler that can mean the difference between life and death.

In addition, it is important that schools have a similar action plan for students who have a history of a severe allergy to an environmental exposure (e.g., peanut or insect sting). This action plan should follow the same principle as outlined above: affording the school the opportunity to provide life-saving medication (e.g., epinephrine autoinjector) to a student who develops a severe allergic reaction while in school while also providing for an approved management plan including critical contact information for both family members and medical professionals involved in the care of the student.

To ensure that schools have the necessary information and necessary tools to retain and quickly put into action both the asthma and severe allergy action plans for each student, the AAAAI, in collaboration with other stakeholders, developed [SAMPRO™, the School-based Asthma Management Program](#). SAMPRO™ provides a tool-kit at no cost to assist families and schools in creating and maintaining this important health information. SAMPRO™ standardizes recommendations for school-based asthma plans and provides websites and resources useful for the care of children with asthma in the school setting. This also provides the blueprint for a management plan for students with severe allergies.

The “School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act” would amend the Public Health Service Act to revise the conditions under which HHS, in making asthma-related grants, gives preference to a state. A preference is given to states that require elementary and secondary schools to have:

- (1) at least one individual, such as a school nurse or other school staff, trained in the administration of rescue medications for allergies and asthma on the premises during operating hours, and
- (2) an allergies and asthma management program that includes a method to identify students with allergies and asthma and an action plan and support system for each such student.

The “School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act” is supported by the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) as well as the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, the Allergy and Asthma Network, and the National Association of School Nurses.

No child should be at risk in school because there are not systems in place to help them manage their respiratory and allergic disorders. AAAAI urges the Subcommittee to markup this important legislation.