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October 15, 2020

**RE: School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act (H.R. 2468)**

Dear Senator,

I write on behalf of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) to urge you to support H.R. 2468, the "School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act" when it is considered in the Senate. AAAAI strongly supports this bipartisan, budget neutral legislation which was passed by the House of Representatives under suspension of the rules on September 29, 2020.

Established in 1943, the AAAAI is a professional organization with more than 6,700 members in the United States, Canada and 72 other countries. This membership includes board certified allergist/immunologists, other medical specialists, allied health, and related healthcare professionals – all with a special interest in the research and treatment of patients with allergic and immunological diseases.

Over six million American children have asthma, a disease that is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism. 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 two most important strategies for preparing schools in the event of an asthma attack are implementing management plans and ensuring school staff members are prepared to assist children experiencing an attack. H.R. 2468 would support schools in the development of allergies and asthma management plans. This type of preparation and management in schools not only will improve child health but will also help ensure students are able to focus on learning.

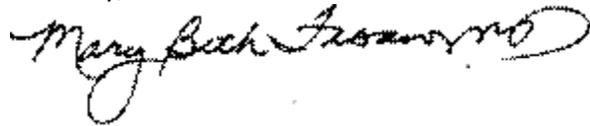
Severe allergic reactions linked to specific food ingestion (e.g., peanut) have increased significantly over the past two decades and this has been particularly true for school aged children. In addition, severe allergic reactions can be induced by an insect sting. Having a severe allergic reaction management plan (similar to the asthma management plan) in place as well as ensuring school staff members are prepared to assist children who encounter these life-threatening reactions would ensure optimized care for the student to potentially prevent a tragic outcome.

We also want to provide information regarding the importance of H.R. 2468 related to the current COVID-19 pandemic. This legislation is important as schools look to reopen and students return to the classroom. AAAAI continues to inform asthmatic patients about what they need to know about COVID-19. Importantly, there have been several reports that steroids are contraindicated in COVID-19 disease. Therefore, it has been important to inform those who use an inhaled or oral steroid to continue their medications to control their asthma during this pandemic. Stopping a controller medication will put the person at risk for developing an asthma exacerbation which many times results in a trip to the emergency department or urgent care where the individual can have a much higher risk of being exposed to someone with COVID-19.

H.R. 2468 will help support students with asthma and allergies and their families and encourage consistent management of their conditions once they are able to return to school.

The AAAAI looks forward to working with you to advance this legislation. Please contact Sheila Heitzig, JD, MNM, CAE, AAAAI Director of Practice and Policy, at (414) 272-6071 or sheitzig@aaaai.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mary Beth Fasano, MD, MSPH, FAAAAI  
President, American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

Enclosures: Issue Brief for H.R. 2468  
CDC Asthma Prevalence & Mortality Data chart