



## School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act (H.R. 2468)

### **REQUEST**

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) urges the United States Senate to pass the bipartisan ***School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act (H.R. 2468)*** which would encourage schools receiving asthma-related grants to have a comprehensive school-based allergies and asthma management program. This legislation is even more important as the country works to have the necessary precautions in place to work toward a successful reopening.

### **STATUS**

H.R. 2468 was introduced by Reps. Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Phil Roe, MD (R-TN) and will help support students with asthma and allergies and their families to encourage consistent management of their conditions as they return to school. The House of Representatives passed H.R. 2468 on September 29, 2020 by a voice vote under suspension of the rules. Earlier in the year, the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee included H.R. 2468 in the January 8, 2020 hearing titled “Legislation to Improve Americans’ Health Care Coverage and Outcomes.” The AAAAI submitted [testimony](#) in support of the bill. On March 11, the subcommittee favorably reported out the [legislation](#), followed by full committee consideration on July 15, 2020 ([House Report 116-530](#)).

### **COST ESTIMATE**

The Congressional Budget Office [estimates](#) that enacting the legislation will not affect the federal budget.

### **ASTHMA AND COVID-19**

AAAAI continues to inform asthmatic patients about what they need to know about COVID-19. Importantly we recommend that asthma patients continue their medications for optimal control of their asthma during this pandemic. Stopping a controller medication because of concerns of steroids in COVID-19 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 would risk increased exposure to COVID-19. H.R. 2468 encourages and supports States in making sure schools have in place comprehensive school-based allergies and asthma management program to support students. For these reasons, [AAAAI has encouraged that this legislation be included in a COVID response package.](#)

### **SUMMARY**

The *School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act (H.R. 2468)* would amend the Public Health Service Act to revise the conditions under which the Department of Health and Human Services, in making asthma-related grants, gives preference to a state. Under the bill, preference would be given to states that require elementary and secondary schools to have at least one individual, such as a school nurse or other school staff, to direct and apply a comprehensive school-based allergies and asthma management program on a voluntary basis. Such program shall include a method to identify students with allergies and asthma, an action plan, and support system for each such student that coordinates with family members and health care providers. The two most important strategies for preparing schools in the event of an asthma incident are implementing management plans and ensuring school staff members are prepared to assist children experiencing an attack.

## **SUPPORT**

The School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act is endorsed by the following organizations:

- American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
- American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology
- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
- Allergy and Asthma Network
- National Association of School Nurses

## **BACKGROUND**

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 Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services 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. If a school doesn't have an asthma action plan for a child, there is little they can do for a child suffering an asthma attack. They cannot provide medication, even if they have it, without parental authorization. An asthma action plan, communication with the physician and the ability for a school nurse to administer a rescue inhaler 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, insect sting). This follows 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 an approved management plan including critical contact information for both family members and medical professionals involved in the care of the student.

The AAAAI, in collaboration with other stakeholders, developed [SAMPRO™, the School-based Asthma Management Program](#) and provides a tool-kit at no cost to assist families and schools in maintaining this important health information. SAMPRO™ standardizes recommendations for school-based asthma and provides websites and resources useful for the care of children with asthma in the school setting.

School is the daily 'occupational environment' for children and should be a place where the local administration works to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all children, including those with allergies and asthma.

## **CONTACT**

Please contact Sheila Heitzig, JD, MNM, CAE, AAAAI Director of Practice and Policy, at (414) 272-6071 or [sheitzig@aaaai.org](mailto:sheitzig@aaaai.org) if you have any questions or would like more information.