



For immediate release
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Contact: Julie O'Brien
(312) 628-0251

Illinois lawmakers unanimously pass landmark asthma legislation

Illinois legislators unanimously passed House Bill 5836, which removes a barrier from students carrying and using their quick relief asthma inhalers at school. This legislation is the first of its kind in the United States.

Since 2001, schools have required students to present a doctor's note in order to carry and administer their own asthma inhalers. But this requirement proved to be a barrier for some students.

The new legislation eliminates the need for a doctor's note, and instead permits students to carry and administer their quick relief asthma inhalers at school as long as they submit a copy of their prescription and a note from their parent or guardian.

"This legislation empowers families and children to care for their asthma by removing a barrier that keeps students from having access to their lifesaving asthma medications," said Rep. Esther Golar. "This proposal was brought to light by community input, and I'm proud to have championed this legislation."

Rep. Golar's district includes Englewood, a community in which as much as 20 percent of the population has asthma. In a study of eight Englewood schools, an estimated 660 children were found to have asthma, but only 38 children had the proper forms to carry their inhalers at school.

In the United States, students with asthma miss an average of eight days per school year because of their asthma,¹ making it a leading cause of school absenteeism. In communities such as Englewood, student health greatly impacts student achievement.

"Because quick relief inhalers are essential in responding to asthma episodes, children must have ready access to their inhalers," said Gay Chisum, RN, an Englewood resident and asthma project manager for Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago. "By ensuring that our students have the medicines they need to keep themselves safe, we can have a healthier community with fewer school absences."

1. "The Costs of Asthma," Asthma and Allergy Foundation 1992 and 1998 Study, 2000 Update.

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Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago (RHAMC) has been a local public health leader since 1906. Today the Association fights lung disease and promotes healthy lungs by supporting research, advocacy, and educational efforts on behalf of individuals and families affected by lung cancer, asthma, COPD (chronic bronchitis and emphysema), and other lung diseases. For more information, visit www.lungchicago.org.