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July 14, 2022

The Honorable Gregory Abbott
Governor of Texas
State Insurance Building
1100 San Jacinto
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Governor Abbott,

We submit this letter to alert you of the unintended negative ramifications of recent legislation regarding abortion and medication access. Texas S.B. 4, which took effect in December and which restricts the distribution of medication that can be used for abortion, has interrupted treatment access for millions of patients who are trying to manage their chronic disease and have no connection to abortion services.

The Global Healthy Living Foundation (GHLF) is a 501(c)(3) patient advocacy organization representing chronically ill patients and their caregivers across the U.S., Western Europe, Australia, and South America. We work to improve the quality of life for people living with chronic disease by making sure their voices are heard and advocating for improved access to care at the community level. Our patients are suffering from chronic conditions including arthritis, psoriasis, osteoporosis, chronic pain, cardiovascular disease, gout, and migraine, and many of them have been living with these conditions for years. We also speak for the thousands of patients in Texas who live with autoimmune diseases and take these medications to control their conditions.

One medication mentioned under S.B. 4 is methotrexate, which is primarily used as a disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drug (DMARD) for the treatment of chronic illnesses such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, and lupus and as a cytotoxic medication in the treatment of certain cancers, including breast cancer, lung cancer, lymphoma, and leukemia. Methotrexate is classified as an Essential Medicine according to the World Health Organization¹, specifically for its use as a DMARD and chemotherapeutic agent. In 2019, over one million people² in the United States were prescribed methotrexate.

Methotrexate is also used in treating ectopic pregnancies and is thus classified under S.B. 4 as an “abortion-inducing drug.” However, ectopic pregnancy is rare, affecting one to two percent³ of all pregnancies in the United States yearly. By comparison, 200,000 people⁴ are affected by

¹ <https://list.essentialmeds.org/?query=methotrexate>

² <https://clinical.com/DrugStats/Top300Drugs.aspx>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/article/ectopic-pregnancy-guide.html>

⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/lupus.htm>

lupus, 1.3 million⁵ by rheumatoid arthritis, and 7.5 million⁶ by psoriasis in the United States each year. As a result, chronic illness patients bear most of the burden of legislation like S.B. 4.

Additionally, because of the time-sensitive risk of rupture for an ectopic pregnancy, methotrexate is usually administered in hospitals or doctors' offices at the time of diagnosis, at a minimum dose of 50mg⁷. In treating chronic illness, the generally accepted maximum dose is lower – approximately 30mg per week⁸. Therefore, it is unlikely that a methotrexate prescription being filled at a retail pharmacy or in doses lower than 50mg is being used for the treatment of ectopic pregnancy.

Here are a few ways that this law interferes with chronic disease patients' access to methotrexate due to renewed concerns about prosecution as violating S.B. 4 is considered a state felony:

- Doctors may have to go to extra lengths to indicate that a prescription is being used to treat chronic illness.
- Insurance agencies may require new prior authorization checks before covering the costs of a drug.
- Pharmacists may deny filling a prescription if the use of the medication is not apparent, or if there is any chance that the medication, while prescribed for another medical purpose, will be used by a pregnant person.

Because of the new limits on methotrexate due to its use in ectopic pregnancies, patients are experiencing delays in access to treatment that can contribute to worsening health. The chronic illness community has been vocal about the importance of DMARDs in treating disease, keeping health stable, and lessening the risk of flare-ups. The need of the chronic illness community to alleviate their pain efficiently and adequately through methotrexate persists even in the face of abortion restrictions.

On behalf of chronically ill Texans, we urge you to inform pharmacists to continue distributing these vital medications to patients with chronic illnesses and assure them that they will not face prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven Newmark
Director of Policy
Global Healthy Living Foundation

⁵ <https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/rheumatoid-arthritis/#:~:text=Rheumatoid%20arthritis%20affects%20about%201.3,be%20related%20to%20hormonal%20factors.>

⁶ <https://www.aad.org/media/stats-numbers#:~:text=Approximately%207.5%20million%20people%20in%20the%20United%20States%20have%20psoriasis.&text=Psoriasis%20occurs%20in%20all%20age,between%20ages%2045%20and%2064.&text=Approximately%2025%2D30%20percent%20of,that%20produces%20symptoms%20of%20arthritis.>

⁷ https://journals.lww.com/greenjournal/Fulltext/2018/02000/ACOG_Practice_Bulletin_No__191__Tubal_Ectopic.38.aspx

⁸ https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2016/008085s066lbl.pdf

