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NEW LEGISLATION ALLOWS STUDENTS TO CARRY LIFE-SAVING ALLERGY MEDICAL DEVICE

Governor Rod Blagojevich recently signed into law Senate Bill 2898 permitting students to carry and self administer an allergy medication device known as an epinephrine auto-injector or epi-pen. The device is used to stave off severe reaction to food or insect allergies.

“A few years ago the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago helped change the law so students would be permitted to carry their asthma inhalers in schools,” said Joel Africk, president and CEO of the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago. “This year we sought to improve upon the law by adding epi-pens to the list of approved student-carried products.”

Epi-pens are disposable medical devices for immediate self-administration by a person with a risk of anaphylaxis, which is a severe allergic reaction to insect stings or bites, foods, drugs, and other allergies as well as exercise-induced anaphylaxis. For a student with severe allergies, time and an epi-pen can be the keys to survival.

Twenty-four states currently have laws or regulations in place that allow students, with proper authorization, to possess their prescribed epinephrine during the school day.

The American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago has been an advocate for the new legislation working closely with the sponsor State Senator Mattie Hunter (D-Chicago). Joel Africk added, “We applaud the continued commitment of Senator Hunter in leading efforts to protect and improve the health of those with asthma and allergies.”

Chicago suffers from one of the highest asthma mortality rates of any city in the country. Asthma is the primary cause of school absenteeism due to a chronic illness among children.

The American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago was founded 100 years ago as the Chicago Tuberculosis Institute to reduce the deadly impact of the disease. Today, the organization is committed to eliminating all respiratory diseases including lung cancer, emphysema and asthma. Lung disease is the third leading cause of death and disability in the United States.

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