

HEALTH MATTERS

Legislation Could Expand Access To Affordable Medicines

(NAPSA)—Millions of Americans turn to generic medicines every day to improve their health. With generics, you get the same medicine with the same results as the brand-name drug, but at a lower price—up to 80 percent lower.

Surprisingly, there is an important group of everyday medicines, called biopharmaceuticals, that have no generic alternatives because the Food and Drug Administration has failed to create a clear and effective pathway for approval. Treating conditions such as cancer and heart disease, biopharmaceuticals are lifesaving medicines for countless Americans, but their costs are high—very high. Some biopharmaceuticals can run about \$100,000 or more per patient per year. And even patients who have insurance are finding that the drugs' co-payments are reaching thousands of dollars a year, often putting these medicines out of reach.

Biopharmaceuticals are the fastest-growing category of drugs. That's the good news if you are in need of their life-improving and lifesaving treatments. The bad news is that their costs are crippling consumers' pocketbooks, employers' bottom lines and state and federal government budgets.

That's why some members of Congress have introduced the Access to Life-Saving Medicine



If the legislation is approved, consumers would have access to lifesaving medicine at a more affordable price.

Act. This legislation would require that the Food and Drug Administration codify a system to review generic versions of these brand medicines. Once approved, consumers would have access to safe, effective medicines but at a much more affordable price.

To make sure your legislator knows about this important issue, you may want to contact your members of Congress via the Internet. Simply go to www.house.gov/writerep/ or www.senate.gov. For more information about biopharmaceuticals, visit the Generic Pharmaceutical Association's Web site at www.gphaonline.org.

If you or a family member has a life-threatening disease, the last thing you should be worrying about is whether you can afford your medication.