



March 10, 2021

The Honorable Regina Huff
Chair, House Standing Committee on
Education
702 Capital Ave
Annex Room 309
Frankfort, KY 40601

The Honorable John Bam Carney
Vice Chair, House Standing Committee on
Education
702 Capital Ave
Annex Room 357D
Frankfort, KY 4060

Dear Representatives Huff and Carney,

On behalf of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), I am writing to you in support of SB127, an Act relating to student health and safety, which would allow schools to stock albuterol. This bill will improve the health and safety of the estimated 57,000 schoolchildren in Kentucky who are living with asthma, helping manage asthma attacks and mitigating the risk of serious injury or death.

AAFA is the leading patient organization advocating for people with asthma and allergies, and the oldest asthma and allergy patient group in the world. Approximately 6 million children in the U.S. - one in 12 children – are living with asthma.¹ Asthma is the third leading cause of hospitalizations in children,² and tragically, close to 200 children in the U.S. die from asthma annually.³ Asthma affects children of all ages, races, and ethnicities, but its burden is particularly harsh for children of color: in 2015, Black children under age 15 had a death rate from asthma ten times that of non-Hispanic white children,⁴ and minority children with asthma have higher rates of hospitalization, ER visits, and mortality than white children.⁵

In a given year, more than half of all children with asthma experience an asthma attack, a sudden worsening of symptoms that can lead to a life-threatening emergency if not treated promptly and appropriately.⁶ Albuterol, a key “rescue medication” for people with asthma, is an inhaled medication that treats asthma attacks by relaxing and opening the airways.

¹ Zahran HS, Bailey CM, Damon SA, Garbe PL, Breyse PN. Vital Signs: Asthma in Children — United States, 2001–2016. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2018;67:149–155. Available at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6705e1.htm

² American Lung Association, “Asthma and Children Fact Sheet.” Last updated 2020. Available at www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/asthma/learn-about-asthma/asthma-children-facts-sheet

³ CDC, “Asthma Mortality (2018).” Available at https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/most_recent_national_asthma_data.htm

⁴ Office of Minority Health. Asthma and African Americans. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=15>

⁵ Anna Volerman, Marshall H. Chin and Valerie G. Press. Solutions for Asthma Disparities. Pediatrics March 2017, 139 (3) e20162546; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-2546>

⁶ Mayo Clinic, “Asthma Attack.” Available at <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/asthma-attack/symptoms-causes/syc-20354268>



It is vital that albuterol be available to treat asthma episodes in the school setting. While every state permits students to self-carry albuterol,⁷ children do not always have this medication prescribed or immediately available, and self-carrying is not appropriate for all children, particularly the very young. The CDC therefore recommends that schools maintain stock medication to address asthma attacks promptly.⁸

Fortunately, states are starting to take this important step. AAFA conducts periodic reviews of state policies to address asthma and allergy in schools. In 2016, we started tracking whether states permit or require schools to stock albuterol: that year, nine states permitted schools to stock albuterol, and one state required schools to do so.⁹ By 2019, fifteen states either permitted or required schools to stock albuterol.¹⁰

We urge Kentucky to join this list to protect the health of its children living with asthma. Importantly, this move will be consistent with the state’s policy on epinephrine, an emergency medication for allergic reactions: Kentucky permits schools to maintain a supply of stock epinephrine.¹¹ The same logic – that schools should be equipped to respond swiftly to health emergencies that can quickly turn serious or deadly – supports extending the policy to albuterol.

Thank you very much for your time and attention. We stand ready to provide any further information to help support this important bill.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Mendez
President and Chief Executive Officer
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

⁷ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, “2016 Honor Roll: Asthma and Allergy Policies for Schools” (2016). Available at www.aafa.org/media/1360/2016-state-honor-roll-report-asthma-allergy-policies-in-schools.pdf

⁸ CDC, “Strategies for Addressing Asthma in Schools.” Available at www.cdc.gov/asthma/pdfs/strategies_for_addressing_asthma_in_schools_508.pdf

⁹ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, “2016 Honor Roll: Asthma and Allergy Policies for Schools” (2016). Available at www.aafa.org/media/1360/2016-state-honor-roll-report-asthma-allergy-policies-in-schools.pdf

¹⁰ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, “2019 Honor Roll: Asthma and Allergy Policies for Schools” (2019). Available at www.aafa.org/media/2477/aafa-2019-state-honor-roll-report.pdf

¹¹ KRS § [158.830 to 158.836](#).