



Assembly Member **JARED HUFFMAN**

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 18, 2011

CONTACT:

Dan Okenfuss, (916) 319-2006 or
dan.okenfuss@asm.ca.gov

**Huffman Introduces Bills
to Improve Patient Care and Save Lives**

SACRAMENTO – Assemblymember Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) has introduced two bills aimed at improving patient care by limiting step therapy policies and helping save lives by increasing the number of organ donations.

AB 369 limits an all-too-common practice used by health insurance companies known as “step therapy” or “fail first”. Step therapy or fail first protocols require patients to experiment with various pain medications - including over-the-counter pain medications - before getting the one originally prescribed by their doctor. Oftentimes patients have to “fail” up to five times before they are finally given the prescription that their doctor originally prescribed. The duration of this protocol is left up to the insurance company and can last up to 130 days per medication.

AB 369 prohibits an insurance company from requiring a patient to try and fail on more than two medications before allowing the patient to have the pain medication prescribed by their doctor. This bill also allows the doctor to determine the duration of any step therapy or fail first protocol.

“As a matter of health policy, Californians can no longer afford to leave issues as critical as patient care in the hands of bureaucrats and health insurance executives,” said Assemblymember Huffman, author of AB 369. “We must instead place patient care back in the hands of physicians who are in the best position of knowing the medical history and needs of the patients.”

Huffman’s second bill, AB 693 requires the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to create a hyperlink on its website to the state’s Organ and Tissue Donor Registry, known as Donate Life California. This will give drivers more opportunities to donate organs by giving them the option to register as an organ donor when they annually renew their vehicle registration on-line. Currently, the only organ donation opportunity is when a Californian applies for a driver’s license or an ID card at the DMV. For most drivers, this happens once every five years.

Just 23 percent of Californians are organ and tissue donors. By comparison, the top quartile of states averaged a 58 percent donor designation rate. The national organ transplant waiting list includes

more than 100,000 persons; over 21,000 of them Californians. Of those waiting, one in three will die due to a shortage of organs.

“Giving Californians an annual option to join the Donate Life California registry will increase the number of donors and help save the lives of thousands of people who are awaiting life-saving transplants,” said Huffman.

Both bills will be heard in their first policy committees later this spring.

Assemblymember Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) represents the 6th Assembly District, which encompasses southern Sonoma County and all of Marin County. First elected in 2006, Huffman chairs the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee and also serves as co-chair of the Legislative Environmental Caucus.

###