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BILL TO PREVENT DEADLY ALLERGIC REACTION IN ILLINOIS CLASSROOMS SENT TO GOVERNOR

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today applauded the Illinois Senate for passing legislation to protect school children with severe allergies. Senate lawmakers today unanimously voted to send to the governor House Bill 3294. The bill would allow school nurses in public and private schools to administer epinephrine auto-injectors, or "EpiPens," to students who go into anaphylactic shock, a life-threatening allergic reaction.

"Growing numbers of children suffer from life-threatening food allergies," Attorney General Madigan said. "Allowing schools to administer EpiPens is a common sense safety measure to prevent fatal allergic reactions. I strongly encourage Gov. Quinn to sign it into law."

Madigan said the bill would allow schools to have a supply of EpiPens and allow school nurses to administer an injection to a student believed to be suffering from anaphylactic shock, regardless of whether their medical plan on file indicates an allergy diagnosis. The legislation would allow schools to keep EpiPens for students who are authorized to self-administer the dosage, and for students whose medical plans authorize any school personnel to administer the EpiPen.

"Epinephrine can save a child's life by opening their airways until emergency personnel arrive," said Senate sponsor Sen. Jeffrey Schoenberg, D-Evanston. "If a student forgets their own EpiPen, the time delay while awaiting an ambulance can be fatal. Having this medication on hand so a school nurse could administer it could make a life-saving difference."

"This is a critical measure that allows our schools to be proactive in an instance that could mean life or death of a student," said Rep. Chris Nybo, R-Lombard, sponsor of the bill in the House, where it passed 113-0. "Many children, including my own, suffer from severe food allergies and we must do everything in our power to protect students with known and unknown allergies."

Attorney General Madigan said the bill addresses an increasing safety need in Illinois classrooms due to the increasing number of serious food allergies diagnosed among children. Likewise, according to the Journal of Pediatrics, one in four cases of life-threatening childhood anaphylaxis occurs in children who were not previously diagnosed with a food or other severe allergy. The Journal also found that 25 percent of first reactions among children allergic to peanuts or tree nuts occurred while they were in a school setting.

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