

# Bill S.701 and Alopecia

## A Student Intern's Contribution to Bill Advocacy

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### INTRODUCTION

- Senator Lovely is the Senator for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Essex District of Massachusetts, consisting of Beverly, Salem, Danvers, Topsfield, and Peabody. (Office of Senator Joan B. Lovely, n.d.)
- Senator Lovely's current work includes
  - Assistant Majority Leader
  - Chair of the Senate Committee on Rules
  - Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Bills in the Third Reading
- Bill S.701 was presented by Senator Lovely as an Act to provide health insurance coverage for cranial and facial hair prosthesis. Legislation of similar topics have been presented in previous sessions and has not yet passed. The importance of this bill is to provide insurance coverage for the purchase of cranial and facial hair prosthetics to those who suffer hair loss due to Alopecia.
- Alopecia is an autoimmune disease which results in hair loss. Currently many healthcare insurance plans do not cover cranial scalp hair prosthetics for patients with Alopecia.
- The passing of Bill S.701 will have a positive impact on the lives of people suffering from Alopecia by improving their mental health and issues with body image through increased accessibility to cranial hair prosthetics.

### OBJECTIVES

- To create an informational fact sheet that provides insight on the prevalence of Alopecia in Massachusetts
- To advocate and educate MA communities on the importance of the implementation of Bill S.701 in Massachusetts by distributing said fact sheet.

### RELATED LITERATURE

- The most common type of alopecia, "Alopecia areata is a disease that happens when the immune system attacks hair follicles and causes hair loss" (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2021, para. 1).
- "Alopecia areata affects males and females in equal numbers. It may appear at any age, but most typically begins during childhood" (National Organization for Rare Disorders, n.d., para.9).
- "There are approximately 2.5 million individuals in the United States affected by alopecia areata" (National Organization for Rare Disorders, n.d., para.9).

### METHODS & MATERIALS

#### Alopecia Areata Fact Sheet



#### What is Alopecia Areata?

Alopecia Areata is an autoimmune disease that causes hair loss.

#### Important Facts

1. Almost 7 million people have Alopecia Areata in the United States! That's almost the same number as the population of MA! **2%** of the U.S. Population!
2. Current treatment options for AA are focused on the promotion of hair growth rather than prevention of hair loss. Treatment includes steroid injections, topical creams and ointments, JAK inhibitors, and medications or supplements. Unfortunately, none of these treatments are 100% effective and do not work for everyone.
3. Research has shown that there is no significant difference between men, women, and/or ethnic groups in developing AA. Although there are no solid findings for the cause of AA, research has found that environmental factors such as stress may contribute to the development or progression of the disease.

#### Current Legislation

Bill S.701 is legislation presented by Senator Joan B. Lovely which would include those with Alopecia to have health insurance coverage for cranial scalp prostheses. It is currently being reviewed by Senate Ways and Means.

#### What can you do to help?

Be an advocate and make your support known!  
  
Get educated and learn more!  
  
Reach out to your legislators and let them know you would like them to support this bill!

#### Mental Health

Individuals who have Alopecia Areata are at higher risk of developing the following mental health issues:



- Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Body image issues
  - Social isolation
- It is important to keep these mental health risks in mind when advocating for those with Alopecia!**

#### Matters!



#### The Importance of "Wigs"

Remember that for those suffering from AA, a wig is not seen as "cosmetic".

Otherwise known as a cranial scalp hair prosthesis, a "wig" has been proven to be effective in helping those with AA manage the physical and psychological symptoms that come along with the disease.

Testimonial: "Wearing my wig allows me to go out and not just be socially accepted, but to not feel self-conscious or concerned about others opinions. Wearing a wig doesn't mean I am hiding my disease, it just makes it easier to deal with." -Anonymous

#### MYTH BUSTER!

**FALSE!**  
Alopecia Areata can be passed down to your children.

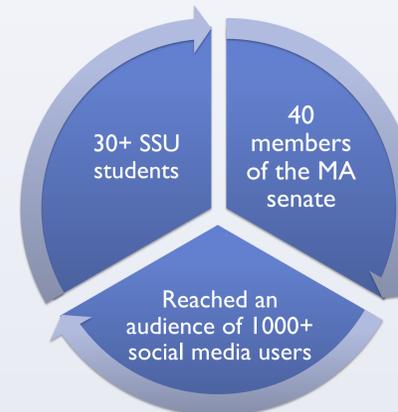
**FALSE!**  
Just because you have AA does not mean your children will! AA is a Polygenic disease and needs specific genes contributed from both parents to occur!

#### References

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### RESULTS

Fact sheet distribution:



The Massachusetts State House where the internship was located.



(Serreze, 2021).



Fact sheets arrive at the State House for distribution!

- As of April 21, 2022, Bill S.701 is with the Committee on Senate Ways and Means after being reported favorably by the Senate committee on Health Care Financing.

### CONCLUSIONS

The creation and distribution of the fact sheet demonstrated that...

- The fact sheet informed our audience. One individual explained, "I was unaware that Alopecia was an autoimmune disease before reading the fact sheet." Another student had said, "The fact sheet helped me understand the impact Alopecia has on someone's mental health".
- The fact sheet was a successful tool in advocating for Alopecia and the importance of Bill S.701.

### REFERENCES

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