

SB1515

New proposal to aid those coping with mitochondrial disease

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Deb McCarver

SPRINGFIELD -The Senate Insurance Committee heard testimony today from Andrew Lawson, a young man who suffers from mitochondrial disease. A new proposal, Senate Bill 1515, would cover vitamins for sufferers of mitochondrial disease and is sponsored in the Senate by Senator John Mulroe (D-Chicago).

"I lost my vision one day when I was in high school," Lawson said. "I was changing classes and I went from one room to the next, and BOOM, it was gone, like that."

Lawson is a sufferer of mitochondrial disease, which causes systemic failure because of non-functioning mitochondria. Mitochondria are organelles within the cells of the body that produce the vast majority of the energy humans need to consume to function. Mitochondrial disease occurs when mutated mitochondria in the body stop working. There is no cure.

As a result of his diagnosis, Lawson is on a constant stream of vitamins, as there is currently no medication that corrects this problem. Under current law, health insurance providers do not cover vitamins, and while many over-the-counter vitamins are available, they are not potent enough for his needs and often contain fillers that make absorption difficult.

"Andrew needs something more to truly live his life, because his cells aren't doing what normal cells do," Mulroe said. "Moving forward we ought to do everything we can to assist people like Andrew in achieving a better quality of life."

The measure is currently being considered in the Senate.

