



March 20, 2017

Representative Stephen A. Huffman  
Chair, House Committee on Health  
77 S. High St  
12th Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

cc: Members of the House Committee on Health

On behalf of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR), I would like to express our **support for HB 72 & SB 56**, regarding the establishment of guidelines relating to step therapy protocols for prescription drug coverage.

The practice of step therapy or “fail first policy” requires patients to try and fail a series of lower cost medications before insurance carriers will cover the medication originally prescribed by the physician. This practice is applied to prescription drugs treating autoimmune diseases such as cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis.

While the ACR does not endorse the practice of fail first policies that can delay treatment, in jurisdictions where step therapy is practiced, patients can be protected through the establishment of clear and commonsense guidelines such as:

- ✓ **Physicians must be able to request a step therapy override based on individual patient history.** If a stable patient has tried and failed medications while under a different health benefit plan, they should not be forced off a medication that is working and made to take a series of medications that have failed already because they changed employers or insurance.
- ✓ **There should be a reasonable timeline for approvals and appeals of step therapy override requests.** In cases of urgent care, override requests should be answered within 24 hours or be considered approved. In cases of non-urgent care, requests should be answered within 72 hours or be considered approved.
- ✓ **The process for step therapy overrides should be easily accessible on the website of the health benefit plan.** When an adverse reaction is expected and patient safety is of concern, physicians should be able to find the process for requesting a step therapy override.

We are encouraged to see the Ohio Legislature consider this important patient rights issue and ask that you please **support HB 72 & SB 56**.

The American College of Rheumatology often provides support and testimony related to its mission of advancing rheumatology and advocating for those with arthritis and rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases. If we may provide any additional information or assistance, please contact our Senior Manager of State Affairs, Hayley McCloud, at hmcloud@rheumatology.org or (404) 486-0116.

Sincerely,

Sharad Lakhanpal, MBBS, MD  
President, American College of Rheumatology