



April 2, 2018

The Honorable Representative Stephen A. Huffman
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High St.
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: HB 72 – Support step therapy process improvements

Dear Chair Huffman and members of the House Health Committee,

You will soon have the opportunity to consider House Bill 72, which would reform a dangerous and harmful insurance practice currently under scrutiny across the country. On behalf of patients, and as one of 60 organizations representing thousands of medical providers and patients throughout Ohio, **we urge you to support House Bill 72.**

The bipartisan legislation, sponsored by Representatives Terry Johnson and Nickie Antonio, will provide patients with timely access to the medications they need. Members of our coalition have testified at bill hearings, advocacy days, and individual meetings with legislators over the past two years on the adverse impact that step therapy (also called “fail first”) requirements have caused our patients.

HB 72 improves step therapy protocols, a one-size-fits-all utilization management tool used by health insurance plans, requiring patients to try and fail one or more prescription drugs before coverage is provided for the medication chosen by the patient’s health care provider.

While we understand the need to contain health care costs, step therapy is a major concern because step therapy algorithm requirements do not take into account the physician’s clinical judgement or the patient’s personal medical history.

HB 72 does not prohibit insurers from using step therapy and it does not require insurers to cover any specific medication. It seeks to improve the step therapy process by balancing cost containment with common sense patient needs.

HB 72 would ensure that step therapy decisions are based on clinical practice guidelines or medical or scientific evidence. It would require insurers to have a clear process for physicians to pursue a step therapy exemption. The bill also specifies the conditions under which it is medically appropriate to exempt patients from step therapy.

Excluding physicians’ clinical judgment from patients’ treatment plans creates a barrier to getting the right care at the right time. Step therapy can undermine physicians’ ability to effectively treat patients can reduce the quality of care, resulting in set-backs and disease

progression for patients. In this regard, step therapy results in even more expenses rather than containing them – another reason we urge you to support this reform.

The Chronic Disease Coalition is made up of patients, their family members and health care providers who care deeply about the needs of the millions of Americans living with chronic diseases. We help advocate for people living with conditions such as psoriasis, arthritis, diabetes, lupus, Crohn's disease and countless others. We are dedicated to addressing discriminatory practices such as step therapy, which prevents patients from accessing the critical care and treatment they need to manage their chronic conditions.

Doctors, not insurers, should be advising patients on the most effective medication to help manage their chronic condition. Unfortunately, the patient-physician relationship continues to be strained by insurers looking to increase their profits at the patient's expense. Patients, including Scott Bruun, executive director of the Chronic Disease Coalition, experience this harmful practice regularly – it must be addressed.

Ohioans cannot wait any longer to have the patient protections in HB 72 and we respectfully urge you to prioritize the passage of this legislation. Ohio would join the growing list of 16 states that have enacted similar step therapy legislation, including Indiana, West Virginia, Iowa, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas.

Thank you in advance for supporting patients throughout Ohio.

Respectfully,

Scott Bruun
Executive Director
Chronic Disease Coalition