



Pam Fields
Director Advocacy and Access
Arthritis Foundation
4665 Cornell Rd., Suite 129
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April 11, 2018

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

Dear Chair Huffman and Health Committee Members:

On behalf of the Arthritis Foundation, part of the 60-member coalition representing thousands of 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 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/fail first requirements have caused our patients.

HB72 improves step therapy protocols! Step therapy is a practice used by insurers that requires people with arthritis to try lower-cost medications before permitting more expensive treatments despite a physician's recommendations for treatment. As a result, more expensive effective drugs can only be prescribed if the cheaper drugs prove ineffective. Some forms of arthritis can cause bone deterioration while the patient works through the step therapy process.

When a person changes their insurer or a drug they are currently taking is moved to a non-preferred status, the person may be put through the step therapy process again. Some step therapy protocols also impose these requirements on patients remaining on stable treatments.

We understand the need to contain health care costs, but we are concerned because step therapy algorithm requirements do not consider the physician's clinical judgement as well as the patient's personal medical history.

HB72 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.

HB72 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, convenient 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.

Around 40 Advocates representing the Arthritis Foundation and the Ohio Association of Rheumatology will be in Columbus on April 19 to discuss the urgency of passing step therapy legislation this year. Ohioans cannot wait any longer to have the patient protections in HB72 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pam Fields". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Pam Fields, State Director Advocacy and Access
Arthritis Foundation