



Senate Bill 252 – Proponent Testimony
Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
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Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Center
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Chair Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, thank you for allowing Cleveland Clinic to testify in support of Senate Bill 252, which would prohibit the use of “fail first” or “step therapy” coverage limitations with regard to stage four advanced metastatic cancer.

Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center provides complete cancer care enhanced by internationally-recognized research efforts, offering the most effective techniques to achieve long-term survival and improve patients’ quality of life. As part of the NCCN and NCI-designated Case Comprehensive Cancer Center, more than 700 physicians, researchers, nurses and technicians care for thousands of patients each year. Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center provides a range of services ensuring patients have access to the latest advances in cancer treatment, as well as a range of support programs helping patients navigate the challenges associated with a cancer diagnosis.

Taussig Cancer Center is the hub for Cleveland Clinic Cancer Center. The multidisciplinary cancer building, with 126 exam rooms and 98 treatment rooms, incorporates all services under one roof. By uniting all of our treatment disciplines – surgery, medical oncology, radiation oncology, genetics, nutrition, social work and imaging – it provides great benefits for patients, families and clinicians.

Because of the complexity of stage four metastatic cancer, each patient requires the right treatment delivered at the right time. Step therapy protocols require the use of a specific medicine without knowing the patient’s medical history. 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 and lower quality of care, resulting in set-backs and cancer progression for patients. This is why the passage of Senate Bill 252 is so vital, as it improves the one-size-fits-all application of step therapy.

Senate Bill 252 would prohibit health plans that cover treatment of stage four metastatic cancer from making coverage of the drugs prescribed to treat cancer or associated conditions dependent upon failure to successfully respond to a different (less expensive) drug. This bill would permit use of chemotherapies for the treatment of the cancer without delaying a patient’s care while first requiring them to fail a prior medication. Physicians should always have the ability to use the most effective treatment plans while fighting advanced cancers in patients on a case-by-case basis.

With the recent expansion of step therapy in Medicare Advantage, we have seen multiple patients with a denied claim that forces them to receive a less costly generic drug. We do not



agree that this substitution is therapeutically equivalent in all cases. While the payer does allow for an appeal or medical exception, this results in a further delay for the patient to receive treatment. This delay can range from 1-2 weeks in some cases and is unacceptable for stage four metastatic cancer patients, due to the severity of their disease.

Ohioans cannot wait any longer to have the patient protections in Senate Bill 252 and we ask that you prioritize the passage of this legislation. Ohio would join the growing list of 12 states that have already enacted similar legislation.

Once again, Cleveland Clinic voices its support for the passage of SB 252, and is thankful to its sponsors, Senator Bob Hackett and Senator Hearcel Craig. Thank you for considering my testimony.