

November 30, 2023

Senator Stephen A. Huffman
Chairman, Ohio Senate Health Committee
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, Ground Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: Testimony in support of HB 135

Dear Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Antani, ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Senate Health Committee,

I am asking for your support for Ohio HB 135. Copay assistance programs are essential to patients and their families.

Access to medication is a public health crisis faced by thousands of Ohioans each day. My family lives with a rare disease. Rare disease patients and their caregivers, like me, face many obstacles. Over 90% of the 7,000 identified rare diseases do not have a Federal Drug Administration (FDA) approved treatment. For patients lucky enough to have access to a treatment, they often worry about how they will afford it. The price tag for rare disease therapies is often high given the complexity involved in manufacturing them and the small patient populations.

I want to make sure you know that 99.6 percent of copay assistance programs – which are actual financial support, not coupons - are available only for medications in which there are no generic options. The likelihood of these drugs becoming generic is slim to none in the rare disease world due to the small population and cost to manufacture the drugs.

Unfortunately, when some patients receive assistance to help cover a portion of their high out-of-pocket costs, insurers refuse to allow such assistance to count toward a patients' cost-sharing totals, like their copay or deductible requirements for the year. These copay accumulator policies mean that the high cost for the medication necessary to treat their disease is put back on the patient and their caregivers.

This is a policy that Ohio lawmakers can change. Copay accumulator policies discriminate against those who don't have other medication alternatives, like many rare disease patients. Keep in mind that when prescription costs become too high, patients, like those in my family, may resort to skipping doses or abandoning treatment entirely, which can lead to higher medical costs, as many patients can end up in the hospitals and have long-term health issues when they can't afford their prescribed treatment.

I ask the Ohio Senate to allow all copay assistance - regardless of where it comes from - to count and help patients afford their life-saving prescription drugs.

Now, more than ever, Ohioans don't need more obstacles to good and affordable health care.

Charlene York
Newark, Ohio