

November 15, 2023

The Honorable Scott Lipps
Chairman, House Public Health Policy Committee
77 South High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215



Dear Chairman Lipps:

We, the undersigned members of the Ohio Hematology Oncology Society (OHOS) write today to express our full support for House Bill 177, legislation to protect Ohio patients and employers by reforming copay accumulator policies.

As the financial navigators and practice administrators for the more than 200 Ohio physicians who specialize in the practice of Hematology and Oncology (blood disorders and cancer), we see firsthand how difficult copay accumulator policies make it for patients with high medical expenses, such as cancer patients, to access their treatments and manage their healthcare costs.

- Copay accumulators prevent copay assistance provided by charities and drug manufacturers from counting toward a patient's deductible or out-of-pocket maximum. This means that cancer patients may be responsible for higher out-of-pocket costs before their insurance covers the expenses, leaving them with substantial financial burdens.
- Copay accumulator policies prevent patients from adhering to their prescribed treatment plans. When patients are unable to afford their medications or treatments, they skip doses or stop taking their medications altogether. For cancer patients, this non-adherence can reduce the effectiveness of treatment and negatively impact their health outcomes including their needless deaths.
- Copay accumulators disproportionately affect patients with chronic and high-cost conditions like cancer, creating an unequal healthcare system where access to life-saving treatments may be contingent on one's financial means. The impact is especially hard on employed low-income populations.

OHOS members are committed to supporting policies that reduce cost while preserving quality of cancer care; however, such policies should be developed and implemented in a way that does not undermine patient access. Copay accumulator programs target specialty drugs for which manufacturers often provide copay assistance. Almost all copay assistance is provided for medications for which **there are no generic alternatives**. HB 177 will still allow health plans to use copay accumulator policies when a medically equivalent generic medication is available.

By prohibiting copay assistance from counting toward patient premiums and deductibles, copay accumulators negate the intended benefit of patient assistance programs and remove a safety net for patients who need expensive specialty medications but cannot afford them. We encourage you to support HB 177 and protect Ohio's working patients.

Please contact Michelle Weiss, OHOS Executive Director at mweiss@ohos.org if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

The Ohio Hematology Oncology Society and the following members of the Ohio Hematology Oncology Society:

Michelle Weiss, OHOS Executive Director, Cleveland
Billie Achor, Administrator, TriHealth Cancer Institute, Cincinnati
Maria Alvarez Ortiz, Biller, Blood & Cancer Center, Dayton
Sara Arnold, Financial Navigator, Arthur G. James Cancer Center, Columbus
Kelly Baucom, Financial Navigator, Toledo Clinic, Toledo
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