

**House Health Committee
Proponent Testimony
HB 72
March 22, 2017**

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 72, Step Therapy legislation aimed at implementing guidelines and fair protocols for both private and public health plans.

The Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition (MHAC) is made up of over 100 organizations that provide behavioral health care treatment services as well as many other organizations that serve those whose lives intersect with behavioral health such as hospitals, courts, the faith-based community, managed care plans, and others around the state.

We support the provisions in the bill including the fact that this will not eliminate the step therapy process but strengthen it by requiring step therapy programs to be based on clinical guidelines developed by independent experts. It requires a transparent and accessible process for a patient or provider to override the step therapy process. It also outlines five automatic exceptions for using the step therapy process by insurers. Those exceptions are the following:

- The required prescription drug is contraindicated or will likely cause an adverse reaction;
- The required prescription drug is expected to be ineffective;
- The patient has previously tried the required drug or a drug in the same pharmacologic class and the drug was ineffective or caused an adverse event;
- The required prescription drug is not in the best interests of the patient based on medical appropriateness; and
- The patient is stable on a prescription drug for the medical condition under consideration.

Behavioral health treatment providers spend time talking with and counseling their clients. They learn about their lives and other health matters that may interfere with medications and then decide what is best to prescribe for treating mental health disorders. That determination should exist between only the patient and doctor. Otherwise, this limits patient access to care and important treatment needed for the person affected by mental illness.

Fail first medications can also lead to skipping dosage because of side effects and ineffectiveness. We know that lack of adherence to medication can lead to more health-related issues, emergency room visits, a strain on family relationships, repetitive visits to behavioral health providers for more services, and even arrest, prison, and suicide.

Offices

2600 Victory Parkway | Cincinnati, OH 45206 | 513.751.7747

4500 Euclid Avenue | Cleveland, OH 44103 | 216.432.7262

➤ 101 E. Town Street | Suite 520 | Columbus, OH 43215 | 614.224.7018

mhaadvocacy.org

Many people affected by mental illness are dually diagnosed with substance use disorders. People self-medicate in order to feel better or feel in control. At a time, when opiate addiction is widespread across the state, we must ensure people with mental illness are receiving the care they need and the right medication that best treats their mental health disorder. This legislation is a common sense bill that will prevent more people from opiate addiction and other substance use disorders by requiring fair step therapy protocols. It also leads to better health outcomes and patient care which is critical to treating mental health disorders.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB72.