



April 11, 2018
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: HB72 – Improves Step Therapy

Dear Chairman Huffman and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 72. On behalf of Mental Health America of Franklin County, a member 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, which are a one-size-fits-all utilization management tool used by health insurance plans, which require patients to try and fail one or more prescription drugs **before** coverage is provided for the medication chosen by the patient's health care provider. We understand the need to contain health care costs, and we are also concerned because step therapy algorithm requirements do not take into account 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 ensures that step therapy decisions are based on clinical practice guidelines or medical or scientific evidence. The bill requires insurers to have a clear, convenient process for physicians to pursue a step therapy exemption and specifies the conditions under which it is medically appropriate to exempt patients from step therapy. 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 disease progression for patients.

At Mental Health America of Franklin County, our mission is to transform how people think about mental illness, make it easier to get help, and give people the support they need to get better and stay better. We envision a community without barriers to achieving mental health where no one feels alone on their road to recovery. And we believe that reforming step therapy is an important part of removing barriers to achieving mental health.

Specifically, for many mental health consumers, access to the full range of the most effective medications is a crucial component of successful treatment and recovery. We see such medically necessary psychotropic medications, and their combination with other services and supports, as essential to permit people with mental health and substance use conditions to recover and lead healthy and productive lives.

We know that mental health treatment is complex, and studies show that medications in the same class for the treatment of mental illness are not interchangeable the way medications in other classes may be. Policies such as fail first, or step therapy, are one-size-fits-all. Step therapy policies do not acknowledge that physicians and consumers should make individualized treatment decisions, recognizing the unique and non-interchangeable nature of human

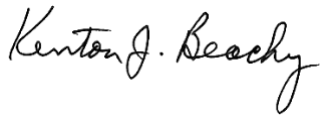
beings and psychotropic medications. Lack of access to the right medication has serious human as well as financial consequences.

Fail first requirements restrict access to medically necessary medication. Failing treatment will often have serious negative consequences for mental health consumers and their families and communities. Failed treatment often results in serious symptoms jeopardizing job performance and continued employment, housing arrangements, and family relationships, and sometimes failed treatment results in hospitalization.

Ohioans cannot continue to wait on the patient protections granted by HB72—please prioritize the passage of this legislation. Ohio would join the growing list of 16 other states that have enacted similar step therapy legislation, including Indiana, West Virginia, Iowa, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas.

On behalf of the clients we serve and all Ohioans with mental health and substance abuse issues, I respectfully ask your support of House Bill 72.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenton J. Beachy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "K".

Kenton J. Beachy
Executive Director
Mental Health America of Franklin County