

On behalf of Toledo Allergy Society, 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 Rep. Terry Johnson and Rep. 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.

HB 72 improves step therapy protocols, 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, but we are concerned because step therapy algorithm requirements do not take into account the physician's clinical judgment as well as the patient's personal medical history.

HB 72 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.

HB 72 would ensure that step therapy decisions are based on clinical practice guidelines or medical or scientific evidence. It would require insurers to have a clear, convenient process for physicians to pursue a step therapy exemption. The bill also 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.

The Toledo Allergy Society (TAS) strives to improve the care of patients suffering from allergies, asthma and immunologic diseases, promote patient and physician education in these conditions, and increase the awareness among physicians, allied health professionals and the general public about the specialty of allergy and immunology.

Ohioans cannot wait any longer to have the patient protections in HB 72 and we respectfully urge you to prioritize the passage of this legislation. Ohio would join the growing list of 16 states that have enacted similar step therapy legislation, including Indiana, West Virginia, Iowa, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas.

Thank you in advance for supporting patients throughout Ohio.

Sincerely,

Binod Thakur, MD
President, Toledo Allergy Society

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Immediate Past-President, Toledo Allergy Society