



February 18, 2019

The Honorable Senator Gene Suellentrop
Kansas State Legislature
300 SW 10th Ave.
Topeka KS 66612-1504

Subject: SB 93, Establishing restrictions on the use of step therapy protocols by health insurance plans

Dear Chair Suellentrop and members of the Committee on Public Health and Welfare,

National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) appreciates the opportunity to express our strong support for SB 93, legislation that would strengthen patient access to needed treatment and protect patients from the potential harms of overreaching step therapy practices.

NPAF represents the voices of millions of adults, children and families coping with serious and chronic illnesses nationwide as the advocacy affiliate of Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF). PAF provides direct case management, financial support and educational services to tens of thousands of primarily low-income patients and caregivers each year who are experiencing distressing financial, employment, insurance coverage, or material hardships because of their health conditions. Over the past ten years, PAF has provided personalized case management services to over 1,500 individuals and families facing serious and chronic illness in Kansas.

Step therapy is used by health insurers to help contain rising healthcare costs. Sometimes called “fail first”, step therapy protocols require patients to try and fail another lower cost treatment before they can receive the medication originally prescribed by their doctor. When step therapy requirements are applied bluntly through broad utilization management practices, patients often are prevented from having access to the specific medications, diagnostic tests or other therapies determined the best choice for them in close consultation with their doctor. This can interfere with timely and effective treatment of their condition, putting patients’ health and well-being at risk.

Prescribed treatments should be the result of shared decision-making between patients and their doctors based on conversations they’ve had about what best meets the patient’s particular needs and circumstances. While step therapy may reduce health care costs, it’s imperative to apply these policies in a way that improves quality care delivery rather than impedes it.

SB 93 balances cost containment objectives with meeting Virginians’ health care needs by ensuring step therapy protocols are transparent, understandable and allow flexibility for considering medical provider judgement and expertise as well as the impact on patients. The proposed legislation is not an outright ban on step therapy; instead, it inserts protections that establish a consistent and transparent process for patients and their doctors to request exceptions to the imposition of step therapy protocols. We urge support and passage of this important legislation to enhance patients’ access to high-quality care.

We thank the committee for the opportunity to support the model legislation. Please contact Sheila Stickel, Western States Field Director for National Patient Advocate Foundation at Sheila.Stickel@npaf.org or 206-915-6375 if NPAF can provide additional details or assistance.

Respectfully submitted,



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EVP Health Care Quality and Value

CC:

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