

March 6, 2020

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, M.D.
U.S. House of Representatives
2342 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brad Wenstrup, D.P.M.
U.S. House of Representatives
2419 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Doug Jones
United States Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senate
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representatives Ruiz and Wenstrup, and Senators Murkowski, Jones, and Cassidy:

The undersigned organizations write to thank you for your continued leadership to advance H.R. 2279/S. 2546, the Safe Step Act. These bills would implement important reforms to insurance-mandated step therapy by requiring a timely and medically appropriate appeals process. Given the detrimental impact of adverse step therapy protocols on the health of patients across the nation, we strongly support the Safe Step Act and urge you to seek expeditious passage of this legislation.

As you know, step therapy is a protocol used by health insurance companies that requires patients to try and fail on one or more insurer preferred medications before they will provide coverage for the medication initially agreed upon by the patient and their provider. Step therapy is widely used by health plans, and protocols vary greatly from plan to plan, even for the same disease state. When a step therapy protocol is inappropriate for a patient, it delays needed access to care and can result in devastating health outcomes. Anecdotes of patients undergoing preventable and irreversible surgeries, or even dying, as a result of badly implemented step therapy is common among many of the patient communities we represent.

The Safe Step Act takes a common sense and balanced approach to improving patient access by ensuring that commercial health plans provide an expeditious, transparent, and reasonable step therapy appeals process. Under the Act, plans must respond to step therapy appeals within 24-72 hours, and base their determinations on sound medical reasoning and the necessity to the patient. Plans must also make their appeals process available online to both patients and providers, including the information needed to submit a successful appeal.

Currently, 26 states across the nation have passed similar legislation to ensure that plans on the individual and group markets are providing reasonable step therapy appeals processes. These models have proven successful, and the protections should be extended to commercial plans.

To support patient access to the right treatment at the right time, we urge you to seek the passage of H.R. 2279/S. 2546, the Safe Step Act expeditiously. To discuss further, please contact Patrick Stone, Vice President of Government and Advocacy at the National Psoriasis Foundation, at pstone@psoriasis.org. We appreciate your championship, and we look forward to partnering with you to resolve this critical patient access concern.

Sincerely,

Aimed Alliance
Allergy Asthma Network
Alliance for Patient Access
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Rheumatology
American Diabetes Association
American Gastroenterological Association
American Heart Association
American Liver Foundation
Arthritis Foundation
Association for Clinical Oncology
Chronic Disease Coalition
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Derma Care Access Network
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Digestive Health Physicians Association
Dystonia Advocacy Network
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
Epilepsy Foundation
Global Healthy Living Foundation
Headache & Migraine Policy Forum
Hemophilia Federation of America
International Essential Tremor Foundation
International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Mental Health America
Movement Disorders Policy Coalition

National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Eczema Association
National Infusion Center Association
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Pancreas Foundation
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Partnership to Advance Cardiovascular Health
Patient Services, Inc.
Project Sleep
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Rheumatology Nurses Society
Susan G. Komen
The AIDS Institute
The International Topical Steroid Addiction Network
The Mighty
Tourette Association of America
U.S. Hereditary Angioedema Association