



March 16, 2021

Via Electronic Communication

Stephen M. Casey
Chair, Health and Human Services Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
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James N. McLaughlin
First Vice Chair, Health and Human Services
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Susan R. Donovan
Second Vice Chair, Health and Human Services
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Rhode Island House of Representatives
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Re: Letter in Support of H5704

Dear Representatives Casey, McLaughlin, and Donovan:

Aimed Alliance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit health policy organization that seeks to protect and enhance the rights of health care consumers and providers. We are writing in support of H5704, which seeks to establish important patient protections for step therapy protocols, and we ask that you approve the bills for a full vote before the legislature.

Step therapy policies require insured individuals to try and fail on alternative treatments specified by a health plan, sometimes with adverse effects, before the health plan will cover the prescribed treatment.¹ Due to rising health care costs, health plans often use step therapy as a cost containment technique. When step therapy is used appropriately, it can steer patients towards less risky and lower cost treatments as first-line treatment options.² However, some step therapy policies are inconsistent with sound scientific and clinical evidence, requiring patients to try and fail on the same treatment multiple times. These policies often do not have adequate exceptions processes in which a practitioner can submit a request to the health plan to override the step therapy protocol.³ In such instances, step therapy can interfere with the professional-patient relationship and cause delays in care. Care delays can interrupt patient stability and result in disease progression and relapse, thereby increasing health care utilization and costs.⁴

H5704 seeks to resolve these issues by requiring clinical review of step therapy protocols, using medical expertise in the decision-making process to establish the recommended sequence when step therapy is appropriate. Furthermore, the bill seeks to establish clear processes for exceptions and overrides that defer to the prescribing professional's expertise and knowledge of the patient, ensuring each patient receives the most appropriate treatment based on his or her

¹ <https://www.goodrx.com/blog/what-is-step-therapy-how-to-get-insurance-to-pay-for-your-non-preferred-drug/>

² <https://www.goodrx.com/blog/what-is-step-therapy-how-to-get-insurance-to-pay-for-your-non-preferred-drug/>

³ https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3009&context=faculty_publications;
<https://www.statnews.com/2016/08/22/step-therapy-patients-insurance-treatments/>

⁴ <https://www.statnews.com/2016/08/22/step-therapy-patients-insurance-treatments/>

unique circumstances. For instance, the bill requires an exception to the step therapy process if the drug required by the insurer is likely to cause an adverse reaction or is expected to be ineffective based on the characteristics of the patient, or if the patient has previously tried the required drug with little to no success. These added protections will be crucial in ensuring the professional-patient relationship is respected and in preventing delays in individualized treatment.

Overall, this bill will protect patients by requiring that any step therapy protocols be grounded in clinical evidence and the patient's health, and not solely based on cost savings. As a result, we strongly support H5704, and urge you to support the bill in committee and before the full legislature. Thank you for your efforts to improve the health care system and to protect patients from the dangers of step therapy protocols.

Sincerely,

Stacey L. Worthy
Counsel

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