

The Honorable Ronald Mariano
Speaker of the House of Representatives
State House – Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Aaron Michlewitz
Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House – Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante
Vice-Chairwoman
House Committee on Ways and means
State House – Room 238
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Paul J. Donato
Assistant Vice-Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House – Room 238
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Mr. Speaker, Chairman Michlewitz, Vice Chairwoman Ferrante and Assistant Vice Chairman Donato:

On behalf of patients across the Commonwealth, our broad coalition of patient advocacy organizations wish to commend the Massachusetts House of Representatives for your work over the years to ensure access to groundbreaking treatments that help improve the quality of life for those suffering from illness and disease.

We write in support of HB 1311, *An Act relative to step therapy and patient safety* filed by Representative Jeffrey Roy and Representative Marjorie Decker to reform the unfair and clinically burdensome process of ‘fail first’ – sometimes referred to as step therapy. HB 1311 represents compromise language that was the result of much dialogue and discussion with stakeholders over prior legislative sessions.

Fail First is a practice insurers use in a misguided attempt to control costs. It prevents patients from accessing the treatment prescribed by their health care provider by making them try and fail on one or more alternative drugs. Fail First policies negatively impact patients dealing with a wide range of medical conditions, including cancer, diabetes, inflammatory bowel diseases, psoriatic and rheumatoid arthritis, mental health, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, autoimmune diseases and more.

We are not asking you to prohibit the use of step therapy, rather, we seek a policy to balance protecting patients when a step therapy protocol would produce an adverse health outcome, with allowing for the use of step therapy when it is appropriate for controlling costs. 33 states have enacted measures to put similar ‘guardrails’ on the practice of step therapy.

Patients need the ability to quickly assess their condition with their doctors and find the best course of treatment for their individual medical needs. Delays in access to the best treatment available, which could be experienced as a result of patients having to go through a step therapy protocol, can pose significant risk to the treatment of disease.

Step therapy can undermine physicians' ability to effectively treat patients, can lower quality of care and lead to setbacks and disease progression for patients. Exemptions from step therapy do not prohibit insurers from using step therapy but seek to balance cost containment with patient needs.

We appreciate your consideration and respectfully ask that the House vote to pass HB 1311.

Sincerely,

Aimed Alliance
Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance for Gout Awareness
Alliance for Patient Access
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Rheumatology
American Diabetes Association
American Kidney Fund
Arthritis Foundation
Association for Clinical Oncology
Autoimmune Association
Chronic Disease Coalition
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
Color of Crohn's and Chronic Illness
Crohn's & Colitis Foundation
Epilepsy Foundation New England
Global Healthy Living Foundation
IBDMoms
Infusion Access Foundation
International Foundation for AiArthritis
International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
Lupus Foundation of America
Massachusetts Academy of Dermatology
Massachusetts Gastroenterology Association
Massachusetts Medical Society
Massachusetts Pain Initiative
Massachusetts Society of Clinical Oncologists
National Eczema Association
National Infusion Center Association
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Psoriasis Foundation
New England Bleeding Disorders Advocacy Coalition
New England Hemophilia Association
NORD

Rare New England
Susan G. Komen
US COPD Coalition
U.S. Pain Foundation
Vision Health Advocacy Coalition
ZERO - The End of Prostate Cancer