

March 12, 2025

Senator Melissa Murray, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Murray and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services,

The State Access to Innovative Medicines Coalition is pleased to support **S 116**, which would update and clarify existing statute related to step therapy procedures. We thank the committee for considering the bill and for the opportunity to provide comments.

As patient and provider organizations, the 15 undersigned organizations are dedicated to ensuring that individuals with rare and serious diseases have access to the treatments they need. Our collective efforts focus on advocating for state policies that remove barriers to treatment and improve patient outcomes. Together, we work to drive the changes needed to support patients in accessing life-saving therapies.

Payer utilization management approaches like step therapy protocols are of particular concern because they represent greater likelihood of raising barriers to appropriate care for individuals with serious diseases. While many treatments preferred by payers cost less, they may not be the best treatment available for the patient.

Step therapy or fail first policies can be particularly problematic for patients with rare or serious conditions because they can significantly delay a patient's access to the best treatment available for their condition. While waiting to complete a "step," a patient may experience disease progression and irreversible damage to their overall health.

The SAIM coalition is pleased that S 116 would place guardrails around step therapy by requiring carriers to grant an exception to a step therapy protocol if:

- The drug required to be used is contraindicated or is expected to cause an adverse reaction;
- The drug required to be used has been tried and found to be ineffective;
- The drug has not been tried but is expected to be ineffective;
- It will delay or prevent medically necessary care; or
- It will disrupt the patient's current effective drug regimen.

This bill would also ensure timely access to care by requiring that a step therapy exemption request must be answered within 72 hours under normal circumstances or within 24 hours if the request is urgent.

The SAIM Coalition appreciates the steps that S 116 takes toward improving step therapy procedures in Rhode Island, and we urge the Committee to pass this measure. Please contact Sarah Lanford at ASCO at Sarah.Lanford@asco.org if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

The Allergy and Asthma Network
The Alliance for Patient Access
The American Academy of Neurology
The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
The Arthritis Foundation
The Association for Clinical Oncology
The Association of Women in Rheumatology
The Autoimmune Association
The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
The Crohn's & Colitis Foundation
The Lupus Foundation of America
The National Bleeding Disorders Foundation
The National Eczema Association
The National Organization for Rare Disorders
The New England Hemophilia Association