



April 20, 2023

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maggie Hassan
United States Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Murkowski and Hassan:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 129,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to share our support for the Safe Step Act (S. 652).

Step therapy is an insurance protocol that requires patients to try one or more insurer-preferred medications prior to the medication their physician prescribed. This practice can take weeks or months and can result in patients not being able to access the treatments they need in a timely manner. Physicians can request exceptions to step therapy requirements, but insurers may not respond promptly to such requests, resulting in a further delay of treatment.

Research has demonstrated that step therapy requirements prevent patients from adhering to effective medication regimens, which can lead to worse health outcomes.ⁱ In addition to its impact on patients' timely access to necessary medication, step therapy places significant administrative burden on physicians, who must navigate different and inconsistently applied protocols and requirements across health plans.

The AAFP believes that step therapy should not be mandatory for patients already on a working course of treatment and that generic medications should not require prior authorization. We are pleased to support your legislation, which would reform the inconsistent and opaque use of step therapy practices by insurers. Specifically, it would implement transparency guidelines to prevent inappropriate use of step therapy in employer-sponsored health plans and create a clear process for patients and physicians to seek reasonable exceptions to step therapy.

We applaud your continued leadership on this important issue, and we look forward to working with you to improve timely access to care for patients while reducing administrative burden for physicians. For questions, please contact Natalie Williams, Senior Manager of Legislative Affairs at nwilliams2@aafp.org.

Sincerely,

Sterling N. Ransone, Jr., MD, FFAFP
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians

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ⁱ Boytsov N, Zhang X, Evans KA, Johnson BH. Impact of plan-level access restrictions on effectiveness of biologics among patients with rheumatoid or psoriatic arthritis. *Pharmacoeccon Open*. 2020;4(1):105–17.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41669-019-0152-1>