



May 19, 2021

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, MD  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Murkowski and Representative Ruiz:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 133,500 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to share our organization's support for your bicameral legislation, the Safe Step Act (S. 464 / H.R. 2163).

Your legislation 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. The AAFP has long advocated 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. Ongoing care should continue while prior authorization approvals or step therapy overrides are obtained. To ensure access, patients should not be required to repeat or retry step therapy protocols that failed under previous benefit plans.

Additionally, step therapy increases administrative burden for physicians. A study found that primary care physicians spent 27 percent of their time on clinical activities and 49 percent on administrative activities.<sup>1</sup> The study also concluded that primary care physicians spend nearly 50 percent of their time on cumbersome administrative tasks. This inefficiency and time diverted from patient care is clearly not acceptable, and patients should not be required to repeat or retry step therapy protocols failed under previous benefit plans.

Unfortunately, far too many patients encounter delays in accessing needed care due to restrictive insurer practices like step therapy. Your legislation would address this and put reasonable limits on insurers' use of step therapy and creates clarity for patients and physicians.

The AAFP applauds the introduction of the Safe Step Act and stands ready to help you pass this important legislation. If you have questions, please contact John Agular, Manager of Legislative Affairs, at [jagular@aafp.org](mailto:jagular@aafp.org).

Sincerely,

Gary L. LeRoy, MD, FAAFP  
Board Chair, American Academy of Family Physicians

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<sup>1</sup> Sinsky, C., Colligan, L., Li, L., Prgomet, M., Reynolds, S., Goeders, L., ... Hingle, S. (2016, December 6). Allocation of Physician Time in Ambulatory Practice: A Time and Motion Study in 4 Specialties. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M16-0961>.