



February 27, 2020

Chair Shane E. Pendergrass
Health and Government Operations Committee
Legislative Services Building
90 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Health and Government Operations Committee Members,

On behalf of the 1.1 Million Maryland residents living with doctor-diagnosed arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation asks for your support of H1359, legislation that would reform health insurance step therapy protocols. This important legislation will provide patients timely access to the medications they need to maintain their health.

While step therapy can be an appropriate way to control costs, for some patients this “one-size-fits-all” process can produce adverse health outcomes. For Maryland children and adults with chronic, debilitating and sometimes life-threatening diseases like arthritis, delaying access to the appropriate treatment, or requiring them to “fail-first” on a medication an insurer chooses rather than one originally prescribed by their physician can have a significant negative impact on a patient’s continuity of care. This can result in progression of their condition, loss of function or mobility, or other devastating consequences as well as increased overall healthcare costs.

A survey of over 1,400 patients completed by the Arthritis Foundation in 2016 found that over 50% of all patients surveyed reported having to try two or more different drugs prior to getting the medication their doctor had initially prescribed. Step therapy was stopped in 39% of cases because the drugs were ineffective, and 20% of the time due to worsening conditions. A majority of respondents experienced negative health effects from delays in receiving their prescriber’s preferred treatment.

H1359 creates common-sense reforms for all Maryland patients by guaranteeing access to a clear process to request a step therapy exception when it is medically appropriate. This successfully balances protecting patients while still allowing the use of step therapy. For more information, please contact Ben Chandhok, Senior Director of State Legislative Affairs with the Arthritis Foundation, at bchandhok@arthritis.org or 513-484-7623.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Chandhok

Ben Chandhok
Senior Director of State Legislative Affairs
Arthritis Foundation