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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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**Testimony in Support of SB0921 - Health Insurance - Step Therapy or Fail-First Protocols
- Drugs to Treat Associated Conditions of Advanced Metastatic Cancer**

Madame Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and fellow members of the Senate Finance Committee:

SB0921 is more than legislation—it is a vital lifeline for patients fighting metastatic cancer. This bill stands against the cruel practice of step therapy for medications prescribed to treat conditions associated with metastatic cancer.

Step therapy—often called “fail first”—forces patients to try a cheaper, health plan-preferred drug before they can access the treatment their doctors have prescribed. This process not only undervalues the expertise of medical professionals but also places profit over the very lives of our constituents. It is a practice that can mean a delay in effective treatment, causing needless suffering and, in some cases, life-altering harm.

Metastatic breast cancer is the most advanced stage of this devastating disease. While we have yet to find a cure, effective treatment can and does offer hope—hope that nearly one-third of women in the United States have seen by surviving at least five years after diagnosis. These statistics are not mere numbers; they represent real lives, real struggles, and real victories over seemingly insurmountable odds.

Maryland has made commendable progress by imposing safeguards around step therapy protocols. However, these protections have not reached all who need them. Patients battling metastatic cancer—and those enduring the severe side effects that come with it—are still left vulnerable. Conditions such as intense pain, crippling fatigue, lymphedema, relentless nausea, nerve damage, and dangerous declines in white blood cell counts are not secondary issues; they are critical challenges that affect quality of life every single day.

I urge you to remember the story of a Susan G. Komen advocate from Baltimore—a dedicated bus driver whose world was upended when her cancer advanced. The excruciating pain forced her to leave her job, stripping her of security and dignity. Her story is a stark reminder that the struggle to access appropriate medication is not merely an administrative hurdle—it is a battle that can determine a person's ability to live with dignity.

Today, we have the opportunity to declare that no patient, especially not one facing the relentless challenge of metastatic cancer, should be forced to navigate bureaucratic obstacles in accessing

life-saving medications. By supporting SB0921, you choose compassion over cost-cutting, dignity over delay, and life over red tape.

I implore you to join me in standing with those who need us most. Let us ensure that our healthcare system is a system that cares for its people, not one that stands in the way of their recovery and hope.

Per the Fiscal Note, SB0921 would have minimal impact, but would generate a slight amount of additional revenue without additional expenses. For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB0921.