



February 19, 2019

Senator Gene Sullentrop
Chairman of Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St, Room 441-E
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Chairman Sullentrop:

My name is Dr. Mark Box and I am currently and have been a practicing rheumatologist in the Kansas City area for 25 years. I am the current president of the Midwest Rheumatology Society and represent the rheumatology community in the Kansas City Metropolitan area. I serve on the Board of Directors for the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO), an organization that represents regional and state rheumatology societies. In addition, I serve as the Chairman of the Leadership Board for the Arthritis Foundation in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

In my capacities, I am testifying in favor of Senate Bill 93, a bill which provides much needed reforms to step therapy, a utilization management protocol otherwise known as "fail-first". As a rheumatologist, I can attest to the importance of providing a continuum of care to patients with complex, severe and life-threatening autoimmune diseases. As it currently stands, patients are often made to take medications that have been proved to be ineffective for them or have caused them to have adverse effects because of formulary or insurance plan changes.

The patient populations I treat are particularly vulnerable to changes in medication treatment. Disruptions in prescribed treatments which have been effective in treating a patient's condition can have both short and long-term effects resulting in increased health care costs, hospitalizations, and a host of other potential complications.

Requiring a patient to take other non-effective medications which they have already tried and failed on disrupts a patient's medical stability. When a patient is stable on a medication, it is important that the therapy be maintained uninterrupted. If a patient has taken a medication and failed previously while on it, whether during their current health plan or a previous health plan, they should not be forced to repeat the medication. Due to the step therapy protocols in place, and which are currently protected by law in the state of Kansas, patients with chronic and life-threatening diseases are at risk.

Simply put, it is my belief that legislation should be put in place to implement basic and medically sound step programs to ensure patients are receiving the best and most appropriate care possible.

Senate Bill 93 ensures that step therapy exemptions will be clinically grounded and transparent. The bill would allow for providers such as myself to provide insurance plans with relevant documentation from a patient's medical history to support a step therapy exemption request.

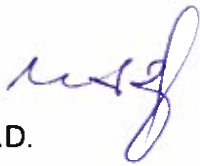
The bill would not prevent insurers from using step therapy protocols altogether or prevent insurers from requiring prior authorizations. The bill also does not prevent insurers from requiring patients to try a generic equivalent medication.

Senate Bill 93 does improve the process for step therapy exemptions which are needed to provide patients who have previously failed on medications to not have to fail on them again.

In sum, step therapy reform would help prevent patient complications from occurring that are often costly to the health care system and would preserve the provider/patient relationship.

I respectfully ask you to preserve Kansas patients' access to care by voting in favor of SB 93.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'msb', is written over the word 'Respectfully,'.

Mark S. Box, M.D.