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The Honorable Gene Suellentrop
Chairman – Public Health and Welfare Committee
Kansas Senate
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Suellentrop:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on SB93.

The American Lung Association is the oldest voluntary health organization in the United States. For more than 110 years, the Lung Association has been working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy and research. The Lung Association works on behalf of the 35 million Americans living with lung diseases, including over 343,000 patients with lung disease in Kansas.

Ensuring that lung disease patients have quality and affordable healthcare is a main priority for the American Lung Association. The Lung Association strongly believes that clinical care for lung disease patients should follow evidence-based guidelines including the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) guidelines, the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) guidelines, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines for lung cancer treatment¹. However, coverage restrictions, such as step therapy, can impede access to guidelines-based care.

Step therapy can make it difficult for patients to get medications to help them breathe or treat life-threatening conditions like lung cancer. Patients need to be able to receive the medications that their providers believe would be best for them, not be forced to cycle through potentially less effective or ineffective medications. Navigating burdensome step therapy processes can also be challenging for both patients and providers. This can lead patients to delay or discontinue treatment, which ultimately leads to higher health care costs.

The Lung Association supports the improvements that SB93 will make to the step therapy process for patients, including ensuring step therapy protocols are based on evidence-based guidelines, requiring health plans to grant overrides to the step therapy process when patients have already tried the required medications when covered by other insurance plans, as well as setting up a process for patients to appeal decisions in a timely manner.

The American Lung Association urges the Committee to support SB93 to increase protections for patients during the step therapy process and improve access to evidence-based treatment for lung disease patients.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Sincerely,

Sara Prem

¹ National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, Third Expert Panel on the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma. Bethesda (MD): National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (US); 2007 Aug. Accessed at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK7222/>; Global Strategy for the Diagnosis, Management and Prevention of COPD, Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) 2017. Available from: <http://goldcopd.org>; National Comprehensive Cancer Network, NCCN Guidelines. Accessed at: https://www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/default.aspx#site