



February 3, 2021

House and Human Services Committee
Chairwoman Landwehr
Committee Members

Chair Landwehr and Committee Members,

Thank you for your service and for this opportunity to share with you my support of HB 2157 in my role as the Executive Director of NAMI Kansas and as a concerned family member. It is my hope that this Committee will seek to protect patients across the state of Kansas through your support of HB 2157, protecting against step therapy protocols that pose dangerous consequences for those who experience medical and mental health needs.

Step therapy protocols, also known as “fail first” requirements, requires a patient to try then fail on lower-cost or older drugs selected by their insurance company before coverage is granted for the drug prescribed by the patient’s doctor. For patients living with serious or chronic illnesses, including mental health conditions, prolonging ineffective treatment (and delaying access to the right treatment) may result in pain, disease growth, loss of function and mobility, and possibly irreversible damage.

Patients deserve supportive, transparent insurance coverage – free from barriers that make it harder to get the best possible treatment. Step therapy protocols limit a health care provider’s ability to tailor care to individual patient needs. It is critical that medical decisions are in the hands of patients and their doctors – not with insurance companies.

As previously stated, I am also a concerned family member. My brother suffered a heart attack at the age of 48. Follow up medical treatment and care for my brother included a monthly testosterone therapy to help stabilize hormones, reduce stress and anxiety, manage panic attacks, and create the overall environment necessary to maintain his health through exercise and diet. For three years, this treatment worked well for my brother; however, when his employer changed insurance providers, the new provider imposed its step therapy protocol and declined testosterone therapy.

My brother and his medical doctor pursued an appeal but have yet to find success. My brother tried to continue the testosterone therapy through self-pay, however, at the rate of \$600/month, this was not sustainable. Now, he struggles with severe anxiety and panic attacks on a near daily basis, deteriorating his physical health and interfering with his ability to work as a heavy construction operator.

I hope that your committee will consider HB 2157 to protect Kansans against this unnecessary and harmful practice.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sherrie Vaughn, Ed. D.
Executive Director

1801 SW Wanamaker Rd. ▪ Box 164 ▪ Topeka, KS 66604
785-233-0755 ▪ 785-233-4804 (FAX) ▪ 800-539-2660
info@namikansas.org ▪ www.namikansas.org