

To: Chair Rep Brenda Landwehr, Health and Human Services Committee
Vice – Chair John Eplee, MD

From Peggy L Johnson, COO, Wichita Medical Research and Education Foundation: Patient Advocate,
Susan G Komen Public Policy Ambassador: Kansas Cancer Partnership member.

Subject: HB 2157 Establishing restrictions on the use of step therapy protocols by health insurance plans.

Thank you, Chair Landwehr, Vice Chair Dr. Eplee and members of the committee for the opportunity to talk with you today in support of HR2157.

My name is Peggy Johnson and I am COO of Wichita Medical Research and Education Foundation in Wichita. I am a long time Susan G Komen advocate and a nine-year breast cancer survivor. I have served in a number of volunteer positions with Susan G Komen, the Kansas Cancer Partnership, the support organization for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and also serve in a number ways for the University of Kansas Cancer Center, including chair of the Masonic Cancer Alliance Community Advisory Board.

Komen believes, as do the other organizations I represent, health care decisions should always be between a patient and their provider. These decisions depend on many factors such as age, type of cancer and the characteristics of the disease. Deciding on a particular treatment option is as much a personal matter as it is a medical one. People who are fighting cancer should have the opportunity to choose the best therapy without the burden of overly restrictive cost containment policies. Step therapy, also referred to as “fail first”, requires a patient to first try a preferred (often generic alternative) drug prior to receiving coverage for the originally prescribed drug. Step therapy is a method of utilization management employed to control costs by beginning treatment with a cheaper drug therapy (often not as effective) and then progressing to the newer treatment, only if necessary.

Preventing breast cancer patients and all cancer patients from receiving the most effective therapy from the beginning of their treatment plan can further compromise their outcomes. Additionally, studies have shown the ‘fail first’ option results in *much higher healthcare costs*. In plans that currently utilize these protocols, it has been found that 53 percent of patients whose oncology medications were rejected because they did not meet step therapy requirements did not receive another drug within the recommended 30-day window. Timing of treatment is critical in the treatment of cancer. Anyone diagnosed with breast cancer or any cancer, should never be forced to delay the recommended, or most effective treatment, due to insurance design or cost-containment strategies, especially when we know that breast cancer becomes five times more expensive to treat once it has spread beyond the breast.

In many cases cancer treatment will include ‘quality of life’ drugs to help patients tolerate the chemotherapy side effects. These drugs allow patients to be able to stay on their recommended treatment. However, these drugs are often caught in the ‘fail first’ cycle and may cause a patient to simply stop treatment because of side effects. To ensure patients and their physicians can choose the most appropriate and effective course of treatment for them, Susan G. Komen advocates against

policies that increase insurance barriers precluding physician decision making, and placing unnecessary burdens on accessing care, including step therapy protocols.

When these 'fail first' strategies are employed the treating physician is required to 'state their case' in written form. All physicians, especially now, simply don't have the time. None of us want our physicians to take time away from direct patient care. Komen has for more than 30 years been dedicated to the fight against breast cancer right here in Kansas. As committed partners in improving the outcomes for those diagnosed with breast cancer, we know how deeply important it is for all cancer patients to have fair and equal access to the therapies that may save their lives. As such, we testify today in favor of HB 2157 and we urge you to support this legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

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