

Honorable David Wallace
Arkansas State Capitol
500 Woodlane Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Senator Wallace:

Thank you for your service during these trying times. On behalf of the Rheumatology Nurses Society and the rheumatology health care professionals we represent across Arkansas, we are writing to ask for your support of SB 99 to update the state's step therapy law.

Step therapy, also known as "fail first," is an insurance company practice that requires patients to try and fail one or several medications chosen by their insurer before allowing them to take the medicine prescribed by their provider. Step therapy protocols vary widely among insurers. Navigating an appeal can be confusing and time consuming for patients and their healthcare providers, sometimes taking weeks or even months. This process of prolonging ineffective treatment and delaying access to the right treatment – especially for patients living with serious or chronic illnesses – can lead to medical setbacks, disease progression, loss of function and even hospitalizations.

Although Arkansas has some safeguards in place, we ask your support of SB 99 to allow patients better access to the most appropriate treatments prescribed by their healthcare providers. This would be accomplished by:

- Ensuring step therapy protocols are based on widely-accepted medical and clinical guidelines;
- Creating a clear and expeditious appeals process – requiring a reply within 24 hours for an emergency or 72 hours for a non-emergency;
- Protecting patients who have already tried and failed a drug or for whom a drug is expected to be ineffective;
- Protecting patients whose conditions are well-controlled on a prescription from being required to try a new medication against their provider's recommendation or for whom the medication is contraindicated or likely to cause harm; and
- Protecting patients when their provider recommends a specific medication due to medical necessity.

Especially given the additional challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, now is a logical time to update the state's step therapy law to avoid some of the unnecessary burdens on patients, providers and the healthcare system that could be prevented with appropriate and timely care.

We ask you to support SB 99 when it comes to a vote and appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Rheumatology Nurses Society