

May 3, 2021

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care

From: Pete Miller, Board Member, National Psoriasis Foundation

RE: Support for HB 2517

Dear Senator Patterson and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

I live in Tualatin and am a Board Member for the National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF), which is headquartered in Portland. As an NPF Board Member and through my personal experience living with psoriasis for over 50 years, I know how important it is for patients to have timely access to the right treatment and the negative effects of delaying access to care. I am writing to request your support for HB 2517, which will help patients get the appropriate treatment by creating commonsense guardrails for prior authorization and step therapy.

Psoriasis is an immune mediated disease that affects over 105,000 Oregonians. In recent years, treatments for psoriasis have become more effective by targeting specific parts of the immune system. These new treatments have been transformative in the lives of so many. However, prior authorization and step therapy can delay access to treatment and, in some cases, prevent it entirely. Most patients with psoriasis must get prior authorization before they can access the therapy their doctor thinks will work best and sometimes step therapy requires patients to try and fail different, outdated treatment options first.

In fact, a 2020 NPF survey found that, for people taking a biologic for psoriatic disease, 86 percent needed prior authorization and 70 percent experienced step therapy. I have heard many awful stories from fellow Oregonians about step therapy forcing them to take ineffective treatments that led to terrible side effects or unnecessary medical procedures. Not many are aware that psoriasis puts people at higher risk of other conditions – like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and mental health impacts – and that targeted treatments for psoriasis can also reduce the risk for these other conditions by addressing the underlying immune system activity. Step therapy guardrails are vital to helping patients get timely access to the most appropriate treatment.

This issue also hits close to home for me because my daughter was recently impacted by step therapy. Currently pursuing an advertising/communications degree, I am proud to say my daughter has earned a perfect 4.0 grade point average in nearly six straight semesters. However, in high school, she would regularly labor over her homework well into the night, telling us what takes her friends an hour to complete sometimes takes her three hours. Her senior year, we pursued an evaluation by a child psychology clinic specializing in attention disorders. The evaluation revealed my daughter had ADHD.

She was prescribed what she now calls her miracle drug because it turned out to be a game changer. Almost immediately, her senior year began to brighten. She quickly noticed improved attention in class. This new-found focus improved her listening and reading comprehension skills, aided her understanding of lectures, and brought a noticeable spike in her self-confidence and overall personal happiness. Furthermore, the treatment did not interfere with her sleep and she experienced no side effects!

Unfortunately, a change in our insurance meant that she was now required to try FIVE other treatments before she would receive coverage for her miracle drug. So, without much choice, she began trying, and failing, the required drugs which brought many side effects. The most disturbing of the side effects included nausea, headaches, insomnia, abdominal pain, depression, and anxiety. Today, she is back on her miracle drug and excelling at school, but she should not have been put through this agony.

HB 2517 will help many Oregonians, including my daughter and those living with psoriatic disease, access the right treatment without jumping through unnecessary hoops. For prior authorization, HB 2517 will reduce paperwork for patient with chronic conditions by allowing for a 12-month authorization, whereas, today, patients may need to reauthorize their medication multiple times each year. HB 2517 will also allow patients to get a step therapy exception when the drug required by step therapy is not medically appropriate or if they are already stable on a treatment, like in my daughter's case.

I hope you will support the commonsense protections in HB 2517 and bring Oregon in line with the over two dozen states, including Washington, that have already passed these bipartisan step therapy protections. HB 2517 is critical to ensuring Oregon patients can get timely access to the most appropriate treatment.

Thank you,

Pete Miller
Tualatin, OR
Board Member, National Psoriasis Foundation