



February 11, 2025

Representative Rob Nosse
Chair, House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care
900 Court St. NE, HR C
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2536 – Step Therapy Exemption for Metastatic Cancer Treatment

Chair Nosse and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care:

The undersigned patient and provider organizations, which advocate on behalf of the Oregon cancer community, encourage your support of HB 2536, which prohibits the use of step therapy protocols for metastatic cancer patients and the associated conditions caused by the patient's treatment.

Metastatic cancer is an advanced stage of cancer where tumor cells have spread to other parts of the body, such as the bones, liver, lungs, or brain. Associated conditions refer to the symptoms or side effects associated with metastatic cancer and/or its treatment, such as pain, nausea, low white cell blood count, and ovarian suppressive treatment. Cancer is the number one cause of death in Oregon, and nearly 8,000 Oregonians are diagnosed with late-stage cancer each year.

Step therapy, also referred to as "fail first," requires a patient to first try a health plan's preferred drug and have that drug fail them – meaning the treatment didn't work for the patient – before they can use the treatment their provider prescribed. Most protocols rely on generalized information regarding patients and their treatments and don't consider unique experiences.

Although metastatic cancer cannot be cured, multiple treatments for the disease now exist, and all treatments have some side effects that must be managed. These treatments are highly personalized and must be based on decisions made between the patient and their healthcare providers. Step therapy policies are particularly burdensome in oncology, given the individualized nature of modern cancer treatments.

Additionally, more than half of clinicians report difficulty obtaining prescription approval on a quarter or more of their requests, driving up administrative costs and further straining providers.

A recently published analysis found that implementing step therapy protocols could increase the total costs paid by the insurer by 37 percent. Patients experiencing step therapy are more likely to be nonadherent or pay out-of-pocket for necessary medications. Step therapy should optimize care and not lead to delayed treatments, poorer patient outcomes, and increased medical costs.

This bill ensures providers can prescribe the most appropriate, guideline-based therapies without patients enduring unnecessary and burdensome insurer policies. This is even more critical when treating patients with potentially life-ending diseases such as metastatic breast cancer, where any delays or deviations could be deadly.

As committed partners in the fight against breast cancer, we know how essential it is for metastatic cancer patients to have fair and equal access to treatments that may save their lives. As such, we strongly support HB 2536 and urge you to pass this critical legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

For more information, please contact Elena M. Teare of Susan G. Komen at eteare@komen.org.