



Rhode Island Senate Health & Human Services Committee
Rhode Island House Health & Human Services Committee
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for SB 2611 and HB 7822

March 18, 2024

Chair Miller, Chair Donavan, members of both the Senate and House Health & Human Services Committees,

On behalf of the Chronic Disease Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to support Senate Bill 2611 and House Bill 7822, which would make meaningful patient-centered reforms to Rhode Island's harmful step therapy protocols.

The Chronic Disease Coalition is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to raising the patient voice and perspective in healthcare policymaking. The coalition was founded in 2015 to advocate for people living with long-term or lifelong health conditions. Our patient advisors and partners represent common diseases (e.g., diabetes, kidney disease, arthritis), rare diseases (e.g., Guillain-Barré syndrome, hypoparathyroidism), and many other conditions whose scale and scope are still not understood.

Step therapy is a harmful requirement that often delays needed treatment for those living with chronic illness (mental, physical, and otherwise) and goes against their doctors' initial prescriptions. Step therapy is a utilization management process instituted by insurance companies that forces patients to try and fail on cheaper treatment options before approving the doctor's recommendation.

Step therapy can leave patients to battle debilitating side effects while waiting for their doctor's first choice. Fail first requirements greatly hinder access to care and can even lead patients to stop treatment entirely, especially for those battling mental illnesses – all to protect the insurance company's bottom line.

We must put an end to these practices to expedite care and protect the patients that are forced to be experiments under the direction of insurers. Step therapy often means worse health outcomes for chronic patients, which becomes a longer-term problem when those patients rely more and more on public assistance to manage their conditions.

As health care leaders in Rhode Island, we urge you to join the Chronic Disease Coalition in supporting this legislation. This is an important step that will lead to better patient outcomes across the state. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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