



March 24, 2026

Representative Susan Donovan, Chair
House Committee on Health and Human Services
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chair Donovan and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services,

The Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is pleased to support **H 7539**, which would streamline step therapy procedures in the state.

ASCO is committed to supporting policies that reduce cost while preserving quality of cancer care; it is critical that such policies be developed and implemented in a way that does not undermine patient access. Payer utilization management approaches like step therapy protocols are of particular concern because they represent greater likelihood of raising barriers to appropriate care for individuals with cancer. While many treatments preferred by payers cost less, they may not be the best treatment available for the patient.

Step therapy or fail first policies can be particularly problematic for patients with cancer because they can significantly delay a patient's access to the best treatment available for their condition. While waiting to complete a "step," a patient with cancer may experience disease progression and irreversible damage to their overall health.

ASCO is pleased that H 7539 would place guardrails around step therapy by requiring carriers to grant an exception to a step therapy protocol if:

- The drug required to be used is contraindicated or is expected to cause an adverse reaction;
- The drug required to be used has been tried and found to be ineffective;
- The drug has not been tried but is expected to be ineffective;
- It will delay or prevent medically necessary care; or
- It will disrupt the patient's current effective drug regimen.

This bill would also ensure timely access to care by requiring that a step therapy exemption request be answered within 72 hours under normal circumstances or within 24 hours if the request is urgent. In addition, this bill allows a clinician to deem a step clinically ineffective after 30 days.

H 7539 also prohibits the use of step therapy for cancer, ensuring that some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable patients have access to the care they need.

ASCO appreciates the steps that H 7539 takes toward improving step therapy procedures in Rhode Island, and we urge the Committee to pass this measure. Please contact Sarah Lanford at ASCO at Sarah.Lanford@asco.org if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Ritesh Rathore, MD
President
Rhode Island Oncology Society

Lynn M. Schuchter, MD, FASCO
Chair of the Board
Association for Clinical Oncology

The Rhode Island Oncology Society (RIOS) is a statewide professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer care by championing excellence in patient treatment, strengthening collaboration among oncology professionals, and supporting education and advocacy initiatives that enhance the quality of cancer care across Rhode Island. ASCO is the world's leading professional society representing physicians who care for people with cancer. With over 50,000 members, our core mission is to ensure that patients with cancer have meaningful access to high-quality cancer care.