

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2019

Cosponsor the Safe Step Act

Endorsements: Academy of Integrative Pain Management Advocacy Council of the American College of Allergy Asthma and Immunology The AIDS Institute Alliance for the Adoption of Innovations in Medicine (Aimed Alliance) Alliance for Patient Access Allergy & Asthma Network American Academy of Dermatology Association American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association American College of Rheumatology American Diabetes Association American Medical Association American Society of Consultant Pharmacists Arthritis Foundation Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations CreakyJoints Crohn's & Colitis Foundation Chronic Disease Coalition Epilepsy Foundation The Florida Society of Clinical Oncology (FLASCO) Global Healthy Living Foundation Hemophilia Federation of America Hepatitis Foundation International ICAN, International Cancer Advocacy Network International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis (IFAA) Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc. Mended Hearts and Mended Little Hearts Miles for Migraine National Eczema Association National Headache Foundation National Infusion Center Association National Psoriasis Foundation Ohio Foot and Ankle Medical Association Ohio Osteopathic Association Ohio State Medical Association RetireSafe U.S. Pain Foundation

Dear Colleague:

Join us to protect the doctor-patient relationship and help patients get the care they need by co-sponsoring the bi-partisan Safe Step Act.

When a physician prescribes a particular drug treatment for a patient, the patient's insurance company may require them to try alternative treatments, preferred by the health insurer, before they can have access to the drug originally prescribed by their physician. The patient is not able to try the second treatment until the first one is proven to "fail." This protocol is known as "step therapy" or "fail first" and is deployed by insurance companies as they strive to control costs for themselves while requiring patients to take medication that won't work for them.

Unfortunately, step therapy protocols often ignore a patient's medical history, such as whether they have already tried certain drugs under a different health insurance plan, or if they have other medical conditions that might interfere with the drug's effect. It may also not take into account whether a certain drug's side effects will affect the patient's ability to perform their job, or if the patient would benefit from a drug that has a different ingestion method or dosage form. Each of these aspects can have a profound influence on a patient's compliance and responsiveness to treatment.

While many insurance companies that utilize step therapy have a process by which the patient can receive an exception, it can be unclear, resulting in excessive back and forth between the provider and the insurance company, thereby delaying care and leading to potential disease progression.

The Safe Step Act would require employer-sponsored health plans that utilize step therapy protocols to establish a clear, effective, and fair exceptions process to allow patients to bypass step therapy requirements in limited circumstances. It would also require health plans to make the exceptions process readily available on their website and include an explanation of how to request an exception and any necessary forms or related contact information.

We encourage you to cosponsor the Safe Step Act to ensure that physicians remain the ultimate clinical authority over their patient's care. Please contact Erin Doty in Rep. Ruiz's office at erin.doty@mail.house.gov or Greg Brooks in Rep. Brad Wenstrup's office at greg.brooks@mail.house.gov with questions or to cosponsor.

Sincerely,

Raul Ruiz, MD
Member of Congress

Brad Wenstrup, DPM
Member of Congress