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**Written Testimony
In Support of
*SB 7-AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF STEP THERAPY FOR AND OFF-LABEL
PRESCRIBING OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS***

Insurance and Real Estate Committee

February 18, 2014

Senator Crisco, Representative Megna and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, on behalf of the more than 250 orthopaedic surgeons of the Connecticut Orthopaedic Society, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support *SB 7-AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF STEP THERAPY FOR AND OFF-LABEL PRESCRIBING OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS*.

As advocates for our patients, the Connecticut Orthopaedic Society supports the goal of this bill to remove prescription drug utilization impositions on consumers, our patients. In addition to the inconvenience imposed by insurers, on patients, by restricting the avenues to access pharmaceuticals by mandating specific purchasing requirements, these policies can unreasonably interfere with timely implementation of prescription treatment plans.

It is important for patients to have alternate means to obtain their prescriptions and the limitation to mail order as the sole means of distribution as a condition of obtaining the prescription benefit is unreasonable and can severely limit access for those in immediate need of the prescription and who simply cannot wait for mail order delivery. While we understand that there may added costs to be borne with the use of a trusted neighborhood pharmacy, ultimately patients should be allowed to make the decision as to convenience and cost that best fits their individual needs.

As you are aware, there are often a variety of prescription drugs on the market that may be beneficial in addressing a patient's specific condition. When a patient does not respond, or has an adverse reaction to a specific drug, often a switch from one brand or class of drugs to another has a positive effect on the patient's condition. There must be flexibility for a physician to deviate from insurer guidelines if a

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patient has an adverse reaction to, or does not derive the expected benefit from first line therapies. Physicians are well aware of those treatments that are effective, and those that are not for a particular patient. That knowledge should be honored and not pushed aside in the service of rigid treatment recommendations.

As orthopedic surgeons, we sometimes prescribe the off-label use of a drug to treat a similar condition, such as bone morphogenic proteins (for unhealed bones) or viscosupplements (for arthritis) based on research studies and clinical experience. The information and disclosure we provide our patients assists them in making an informed medical decision. In some cases, Medicare benefits include off-label prescription use and we are encouraged that this bill recognizes the value and importance of off-label prescribing in the treatment of our patients by not limiting or preventing a physician from prescribing in this manner. On the other hand, insurance companies and their medical directors should be precluded from advancing the off-label use of medications as first-line treatment in clinical guidelines where approved therapies exist. Patients should always have access to the medications that are approved for their condition, with the off-label use of other medications only occurring after failure of approved treatments and a thorough discussion with their physician.

The Society is pleased to join the Insurance and Real Estate Committee in support of this bill, which will ensure that our patients have access to prescription benefits that will not limit their treatment options. Thank you for your time and consideration of the orthopaedic community's support of this bill and we look forward to working together to ensure access to quality care for Connecticut's residents.

Submitted by:

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