

March 13, 2014

Raised Senate Bill No. 394

Good afternoon. My name is Wendy Foster. Thank you for allowing me to speak on SB 394: An Act Concerning Requirements for Insurers Use of Step Therapy.

Senate Bill 394 ensures that patients with commercial insurance coverage have access to the same step therapy protections that the Gen. Assembly extended to Medicaid enrollees in 2013.

As a representative of US Pain Foundation, I am aware of other patient's experiences with step therapy. As a patient, I have personally dealt with the practice. As I have no definitive diagnosis, I am treated symptomatically. One of my symptoms is a compromised respiratory system, having both restrictive lung disease and asthma. For this reason, I trust that my primary care physician or specialists will make the right treatment decisions based on his or her knowledge of my condition. At one point, I was given a prescription for a pain medication by my doctor but my insurer required me to try a different medication first before filling the prescription my doctor wrote. As can happen with narcotics, I had increased difficulty with my breathing and required additional medication to improve. Had I been able to fill the initial prescription my doctor had written for me, the additional medication would not have been necessary, I would not have incurred the additional expense or office visit, nor experienced the increased distress that was caused. Another time, my pulmonologist prescribed a medication for my gastroesophageal reflux disease. Because reflux can exacerbate asthma it is important for me to keep mine in check. Once again, I was required by my insurance company to try a different medication first. The delay of the prescribed medication, chosen for me by my physician who knows me and understands my condition, delayed treatment of the reflux and thereby delayed treatment of my asthma. This delay meant that an additional medication was necessary to control my asthma episode.

These are just two examples of unnecessary complications that can arise when healthcare decisions are taken out of the hands of a patient's physician and put into the hands of an individual with neither the personal experience nor contact with the patient.

For these reasons I urge you to ensure that patients with commercial insurance coverage have access to the same step therapy protection that the Gen. Assembly extended to Medicaid enrollees in 2013 by supporting Senate Bill 394.

Thank you