



Testimony of Susan G. Komen – Bobbie Will
SB 2248-Metastatic Step Therapy-add Associated Conditions
Senate Human Services

Thank you Chair Lee and Members of the Committee. My name is Bobbie Will the State Policy and Advocacy Manager for Susan G. Komen. I am here to testify in support of SB 2248. Advocating for those living with Stage 4, metastatic breast cancer, and also for those who will be diagnosed with metastatic cancer in the future.

Metastatic breast cancer, also called Stage 4 or advanced breast cancer, is breast cancer that has spread beyond the breast and nearby lymph nodes to other organs in the body, most often the bones, lungs, liver or brain. Treatment for metastatic breast cancer focuses on extending life and maintaining quality of life.

Step therapy, also referred to as “fail first,” requires a patient to first try a health plan preferred drug, have that drug fail them- meaning the treatment didn’t work for the patient-before they can use the treatment their provider prescribed. This health plan technique is used in an attempt to control costs; despite evidence showing step therapy requirements often adversely impact a patient’s treatment and health outcomes. Treatments are highly personalized and must be based on the decisions between the patient and their health care providers in a timely manner.

North Dakotans who have been diagnosed with metastatic cancer do not have the time to wait and try drug after drug while waiting to finally get the drug that their provider originally wanted them to take.

In 2019, North Dakota did pass metastatic step therapy protocol legislation and SB 2248 would ensure that associated conditions are added in the protocols.

Associated conditions means symptoms or side effects associated with advanced, metastatic cancer and/or its treatment. Side effects include, but are not limited to, nausea, low white blood cell count, diarrhea, depression and pain. All metastatic cancer treatments have possible side effects and most people have side effects from treatments. For many people living with metastatic cancer, side effects can be managed and even prevented with the right medications.

Most step therapy protocols rely on generalized information regarding patients and their treatments and don’t consider unique experiences, previous responses to treatments and any comorbidities. Additionally, step therapy policies are particularly burdensome in oncology, given the individualized nature of modern cancer treatments. We believe that



treatment decisions are most effectively made through a collaborative process involving patients and their providers, prioritizing individual needs and not based on insurer policies.

We ask you to vote in favor of SB 2248 because physicians should have the opportunity to choose the best course of treatment and not have to rely on insurer cost containment policies.

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