



January 28, 2025

The Honorable Judy Lee
Chair, Senate Human Services Committee
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

The Honorable Kent Weston
Vice Chair, Senate Human Services Committee
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: Bill SB 2249 – Step Therapy Protocol Reform

To the Members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

On behalf of the Movement Disorders Policy Coalition, I am writing in support of Bill SB 2249. This legislation is critical in ensuring patients – including those with movement disorders – can access the therapies their health care provider prescribes, in a timely and appropriate manner, by providing clear exemptions and approval timelines when step therapy is required.

The [Movement Disorders Policy Coalition](#) (MDPC) serves as a platform from which stakeholders, including health care providers and patients, can provide input on policy decisions impacting patient-centered care for those living with movement disorders. As a coalition of stakeholder groups across the movement disorders space, MDPC advocates at the federal, state, and health plan levels for key health reforms that increase access to personalized care for patients with movement disorders including Parkinson’s disease, essential tremor, tardive dyskinesia, Tourette Syndrome, dystonia, ataxia and Huntington’s disease.

Step therapy is a utilization management tool used by health insurance plans to contain health care costs. Sometimes called “fail first,” step therapy protocols require a patient to try and fail one or more medications, often at lower cost to the insurer, before he or she can access the medication prescribed by their healthcare provider. According to a 2022 survey conducted by the Alliance for Patient Access (AfPA), 98% of physicians identify step therapy as a significant barrier.¹ These step therapy protocols interfere with the physician-patient relationship, delaying accessing appropriate care, and in turn leading to increased burden on both patients and their health care providers.

People living with movement disorders manage complex conditions and treatment regimens, and already experience significant challenges in everyday life. Timely and effective therapy is paramount to ensuring these patients can successfully manage their disease and have quality of life. Therefore, treatment decisions for these patients should be considered on an individual basis, based on the patient’s health care status and clinician’s expertise, rather than based on insurer step therapy protocols. Patients with movement disorders need direct, continuous access

¹ Alliance for Patient Access. Physician Burnout & Utilization Management Survey
https://allianceforpatientaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/AfPA_Physician-Burnout-Utilization-Management_Tri-fold_DIGITAL_November-2024.pdf

to the medications that have been demonstrated to treat both the physical and mental health symptoms of their condition.

The course of care prescribed by physicians and other healthcare providers is the foundation of patient-centric care. When health care plans interfere with that process and limit the course of treatment, it jeopardizes the patient's overall health.

Bill SB 2249 would improve patient access by requiring insurance companies to establish a clear and convenient process for patients and providers to request exceptions from step therapy protocols. While the bill does not prohibit the use of step therapy or limit the number of steps that an insurer can require, it does outline specific instances where an exception to step therapy protocols would be granted. Clear guidelines, improved accessibility, and more efficient response times to step therapy appeals will aid in improving access to medications and protecting the provider-patient relationship that is critical to successful care.

On behalf of the Movement Disorders Policy Coalition and our membership, we ask that you support Bill SB 2249 and thank you for your leadership on this important issue. If we can provide further details or answer any questions, please reach out to Stephanie Hu at shu@allianceforpatientaccess.org.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hu
Director
Movement Disorders Policy Coalition

Cc:

Senator David Clemens

Senator Kathy Hogan

Senator Kristin Roers

Senator Desiree Van Oosting

*Movement Disorders
Policy Coalition*