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June 27, 2016

Senator Dana Bumgardner  
Chairman, House Insurance Committee  
N.C. House of Representatives  
16 W. Jones Street, Room 2119  
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096

**Re: Support of H.B. 1048 (Lewis) – Reduce Barriers to Improve NC Health & Safety.**

Dear Chairman Bumgardner:

The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations is a national organization composed of over 30 state and regional professional rheumatology societies formed in order to advocate for excellence in rheumatologic care and to ensure access to the highest quality care for patients with rheumatologic and musculoskeletal disease. Rheumatologists are entrusted with the safe care of patients with rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases that require the careful choice of safe and effective pharmaceutical and biological therapies.

As the North Carolina House Insurance Committee considers H.B. 1048, CSRO wishes to convey its support in reforming step therapy protocols. Importantly, a physician's medical decision making expertise in consultation with his patients should drive treatment decisions. Basing treatment decisions on cost rather than clinical considerations ignores important variations that exist among patients in terms of safety, efficacy and tolerability to different drug classes. This is an important point in our efforts to protect patients which has been recognized by 15 states already that have considered and passed Step-therapy legislation on behalf of their patients.

Ironically, it is also important to note that previous Health Plan policies also have increased the administrative burden on physicians and their staff. Research has shown that for a medical practice to administer insurance each year, the average physician spends a total of almost three weeks a year interacting with health plans, while 23 weeks of nursing staff time and 44 weeks of clerical staff time are required. The time lost to practices nationally from interactions with health plans is estimated between \$23 billion to \$31 billion annually.

As noted above, current step therapy practices in North Carolina can lead to serious negative patient outcomes and increased costs if not more carefully managed. North Carolina needs to bring this health care issue up to currently recognized standards of care to best treat patients in our State and more wisely manage health care dollars. We urge you to pass this legislation and adopt protocols that are regulated by nationally recognized clinical practice guidelines. This is a bold step for North Carolina that will shift the focus of healthcare back to patients.

The Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO) urges the House Insurance Committee to vote yes in support of H.B. 1048. Thank you for your time and consideration to this important issue for our patients.

Sincerely,

*MICHAEL P. STEVENS, MD*

Michael Stevens, MD  
President  
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations