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January 25, 2017

Honorable Representative Joel Fry
Chair, Human Resources Committee
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50319

Re: Support of HSB 26 – Step Therapy Protocols

Dear Chairman Fry:

On behalf of the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO), I am writing to express the importance of HSB 26, a bill that seeks to place beneficial limits on step therapy protocols in an effort to ensure patient safety and access to appropriate treatment options.

CSRO is a national organization comprised 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 rheumatology patients. Rheumatologists are entrusted with the care of patients with rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases that require the careful choice of safe and effective pharmaceutical and biological therapies.

An increasing number of health plans are making use of step therapy (or “fail-first”) protocols that require patients to try one or more drugs chosen by the insurer before coverage is provided for the drug originally prescribed by their physician.

Step therapy protocols can lead to serious negative patient outcomes, including delayed patient access to the most effective and safest treatment as well as unanticipated increases in health care costs. Simply put, step therapy has become a significant barrier to patients’ ability to get the right care at the right time and may cause patients to unnecessarily suffer both physical and emotional harm.

HSB 26 does not prohibit insurers from using step therapy but seeks to balance cost containment with patient needs. More specifically, it protects patients by:

- (1) Ensuring that step therapy programs are based on clinical guidelines developed and endorsed by a multidisciplinary panel of experts and are based on high-quality studies, research, and medical practice;*
- (2) Ensuring that the exceptions process for step therapy is explicit, transparent, and accessible to patients and health care providers; and*
- (3) Establishing a basic framework that enables physicians to override step therapy protocols where it is medically necessary.*

For these reasons, the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations requests that you allow and favorably vote in support of HSB 26. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael Stevens, MD
President, CSRO