



April 5, 2022

The Honorable Jim Wood
Chair
Assembly Committee on Health
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249

The Honorable Marie Waldron
Vice Chair
Assembly Committee on Health
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 942849

RE: AB 1880 – Step Therapy

Dear Chair Wood and Vice Chair Waldron:

On behalf of the Movement Disorders Policy Coalition, I would like to thank you for your previous work on step therapy reform by passing AB 347 last session. Ensuring access to treatment is essential to patients, especially those with chronic conditions. Today, I am writing in support of AB 1880. This legislation is important in ensuring patients participating in the Medicaid program – 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. This bill would also reform reporting requirements and clinical peer review protocols.

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 tardive dyskinesia, Parkinson’s disease, essential tremor, 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. These step therapy protocols interfere with the physician-patient relationship, and lead to delays in accessing appropriate care, 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. Movement disorders patients need clear, continuous access to the

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

AB 1880 would improve patient access in the Medicaid program 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 help improve access to medications and protect the provider-patient relationship that is critical to successful care.

In addition, this bill will implement reporting requirements by health plans on the prevalence of utilization management tools in their plans and would require clinical, peer-reviewed evidence when reviewing step therapy requests. Reporting requirements are essential in being able to provide detailed information to policy makers. Statistics on prevalence, as well as approvals and denials on patient appeals are vital in ensuring that patients are being protected against onerous utilization management practices.

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 vital decision making and limit the course of treatment, it jeopardizes the patient's overall health.

On behalf of the Movement Disorders Policy Coalition and our membership, we ask that you support AB 1880 and thank you for your leadership on this important issue. If we can provide further details or answer any questions, please reach out to Josie Cooper at jcooper@allianceforpatientaccess.org.

Sincerely,



Josie Cooper

Executive Director

Movement Disorders Policy Coalition

Co-Signing Organizations:

Alliance for Patient Access
American Parkinson Disease Association
Caregiver Action Network
Dallas Area Parkinson Society (DAPS)
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Hawai'i Parkinson Association
HD Reach

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National Ataxia Foundation
National Organization for Tardive Dyskinesia
Parkinson's Foundation
Parkinson & Movement Disorder Alliance
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research

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