March 3, 2020

Representative Kevin Jensen
Chairman House Health and Human Services Committee
South Dakota State Capitol
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

RE: National Psoriasis Foundation’s written testimony in support of SB 155

Chairman Jensen and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

The National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF) represents 8.3 million Americans and over 21,000 South Dakotans living with psoriatic disease. Thank you for the opportunity for NPF to provide written testimony in support of SB 155. This bill puts commonsense patient protections in the practice of step therapy for state regulated insurance plans.

Step therapy is an increasingly common practice utilized by insurers that requires a patient to “step through” a series of medications before the insurer will cover the medication originally prescribed by the patient’s physician. Step therapy can be detrimental for patients facing chronic, progressive, and complex conditions, such as psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, as it can lead to a patient’s inability to access appropriate treatments. Step therapy, when not medically appropriate, can result in delays of weeks, months or years before a patient get the medication originally prescribed by their doctor.

While step therapy is often an appropriate utilization tool it can be particularly difficult to apply towards a complicated heterogenous disease like psoriasis. Failure to take into consideration the unique nature of a disease like psoriasis can be detrimental for patients and can lead to:

- disease progression,
- higher overall costs of care,
- irreversible damage (specifically joint), or
- development of other comorbidities.

It is likely an individual with psoriasis will have at least one, if not multiple, significant comorbidities including: arthritis, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome (diabetes), inflammatory bowel disease and depression.1 These associated comorbidities emphasize the importance for tailored and efficacious treatment plans.

Having a clear process for doctors and patients to request an exception to a step therapy protocol will ensure that the doctor/patient relationship remains at the core of how medicine is practiced and allowing patients to access the right medication in a timely fashion. Senate Bill 155 includes:

A clear process for a doctor or patient to request an exception to the step therapy protocol if at least one of the following criteria are met:

- is contraindicated or will likely cause an adverse reaction of physical or mental harm,
- is expected to be ineffective,
- was previously tried and discontinued due to lack of effectiveness,

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• could worsen a comorbid condition, be ineffective to the patient's medical adherence or compliance,
• decrease the ability to achieve or maintain functional ability in performing daily activities, or
• the patient is currently receiving a positive therapeutic outcome on a medication while under the patient’s current or previous health benefit plan.

Senate Bill 155 also includes a clear and timely process to receive an answer concerning the exception request – 72 hours for emergency situations and 5 calendar days for non-emergency situations. If no response is received, the decision is made in favor of the patient.

The NPF would also like to extend a special thank you to Representative Diedrich and Senator Langer for their leadership – they brought all stakeholders together, including the provider community, health plans, health systems and patient organizations to work on this important legislation that will put necessary patient protections in place and improve the step therapy process for South Dakotans.

The NPF appreciates the Committee’s consideration of this important matter, and respectfully requests your support of SB 155. Should you have any questions regarding this issue please contact me at kstiffler@psoriasis.org.

Sincerely,

Kristen Stiffler
State Government Relations Manager – Central Region