May 27, 2020

Senator Kirk Talbot
Louisiana Senate Insurance Committee
900 N. 3rd Street
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 7080

RE: National Psoriasis Foundation’s written support of HB 263

Dear Chairman Talbot and members of the Senate Insurance Committee:

The National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF) represents 8.3 million Americans and over 115,000 Louisianans living with psoriatic disease. NPF respectfully requests your support of HB 263 by Rep. Mike Huval, which passed the House of Representatives unanimously. This bill updates the practice of step therapy by providing further patient protections for state regulated insurance plans.

In 2010, Louisiana was the first state to recognize the need for patient protections through step therapy reform. With the passage of La. Acts No. 884, step therapy has become an increasingly common practice utilized by insurers/PBMs to require a patient to “step through” a series of medications before the insurer will cover the medication originally prescribed by the patient’s doctor. Further, a recent study showed that step therapy protocol is inconsistent across payers, creating additional confusion and frustration for patients and their providers acting on their behalf. 1 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 when applied towards complicated, heterogenous diseases like psoriasis. Failure to take into consideration the unique nature of a diseases like psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis 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. 2 These associated comorbidities emphasize the importance for tailored and efficacious treatment plans.

Since the passage of 2010 La. Acts No. 884, a decade ago, over 20 states have passed step therapy reform legislation. With the passage of step therapy reform in other states, including Texas, Louisiana patients and providers have found a need for clarification and updates to the current statute. Having a clear

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process for doctors and patients to submit an override request to a step therapy protocol will ensure that the doctor/patient relationship remains at the core of how medicine is practiced and allows patients to access the right medication at the right time. The bill provides a clear process for a doctor or patient to submit an override request to the step therapy protocol. House Bill 263 also includes a clear and timely process to receive an answer concerning the override request.

During this current pandemic, NPF is concerned that the Louisianans living with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are potentially at higher risk of complications or death from COVID-19. It is of utmost importance that unnecessary barriers to the appropriate treatments are removed for these patients.

The NPF appreciates your consideration of this important matter, and respectfully requests your support of HB 263. Should you have any questions regarding this issue please contact me at kstiffler@psoriasis.org.

Sincerely,

Kristen Stiffler
State Government Relations Manager – Central Region