February 9, 2018

Life and Health Subcommittee
State of Georgia
401-J State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

RE: Support HB 519 (Cooper) – Step Therapy Protocols

Dear Life and Health Subcommittee Members:

The National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF) is a non-profit, voluntary health agency dedicated to curing psoriatic disease and improving the lives of those affected. The Psoriasis Foundation is the leading patient advocacy group for the 8.3 million Americans and over 365,000 Georgians living with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

Step therapy, also known as ‘fail first’, is a health insurance protocol that is intended to control spending on prescription drugs. This tool requires patients to try -- and fail -- one or more medications before they are able to receive the treatment originally prescribed by their physician. For those living with a serious or chronic illness, like psoriatic disease, prolonging ineffective treatment and delaying access to the right treatment often results in increased disease activity, loss of function, and possible irreversible progression of the disease.

As a systemic diseases associated with life-altering symptoms, the timely treatment of psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis is of the utmost importance when managing long-term patient health. The Medical Board of NPF recognizes the insurance companies’ need to keep costs down. However, the best interests of the patient must be the priority for both physicians and insurers alike.

The legislation before you provides a timeline for responses to step therapy exception requests. It also outlines clear and concise exceptions to step therapy protocols based on medical necessity. This legislation, which is not a ban, strikes a fair balance between cost containment and health of the patient.

When considering HB 519 (Cooper) we ask that the subcommittee report this measure favorably. We appreciate your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Randy Beranek
President and CEO