August 27, 2018

Massachusetts Senate
State House
24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Support H 4825 with Governor Baker’s amendment - An Act extending the authorization for the use of certain discount vouchers for prescription drugs

Dear Members of the Massachusetts State Senate:

The National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF) is a non-profit organization with a mission to drive efforts to cure psoriatic disease and improve the lives of those affected. NPF is the leading patient advocacy group for more than 8 million Americans and roughly 219,500 Massachusetts residents living with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

I write to you today to express our support of H 4825, with Governor Baker’s amendment, relating to the authorization of certain discount vouchers for prescription drugs. Passage of H 4825, with the Governor’s amendment, would extend by one year the sunset of critical law permitting the use of discount vouchers for prescription drugs in addition to a study examining the effects of drug couponing on pharmaceutical spending and consumer access to prescription drugs in Massachusetts.

Many insured patients are unable to afford the medical care and the full range of treatments necessary to manage serious, chronic and potentially debilitating diseases including psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. A 2017 study of data collected from NPF surveys found that although roughly 89% of patients with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis were covered by insurance, a little over half spend more than $2,400 per year in out-of-pocket costs for their disease. In fact, 39% of patients spend more than $200 per month toward cost-sharing obligations. When facing high out-of-pocket costs, patients do not use their medications appropriately; skipping doses in order to save money or abandoning treatment altogether. According to several studies, prescription abandonment rates increase significantly when cost-sharing exceeds $100.¹

In an effort to maintain their health and quality of life, many patients seek financial assistance programs. A 2017 NPF study showed 31% of patients with psoriatic disease utilized copay assistance programs. A common misconception is that these programs unnecessarily push patients towards high-cost drugs. However, these programs often pay for treatments that do not have a therapeutically equivalent product. A recent IQVIA study on medications with coupon programs show about 0.4% of commercial transactions are patients using coupons for brand products with an available generic on the market.²

Health insurance companies provide an invaluable service to our patient population. However, non-treatment and under-treatment of psoriatic disease remains a significant problem as health benefit plan’s cost sharing leave many treatments unaffordable. We applaud your previous extensions of voucher programs and acknowledgement that these rebates help consumers afford otherwise cost-prohibitive drugs. With the economic burden of psoriasis calculated at $135 billion a year, we understand the complexity and importance of implementing such policies. However, these should not interfere with the patient’s ability to access affordable and effective treatments.

NPF is committed to supporting legislation and programs aimed at dramatically improving the health outcomes for all individuals with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. Co-pay assistance programs are a critical resource for many with chronic diseases, including Massachusetts residents that struggle to afford their medication(s). Therefore, we ask that you support H 4825, with Governor Baker’s amendment, and extend voucher programs while you further this discussion. We also encourage you to seek patient input when discussing this important matter. NPF would be happy to share our expertise and data surrounding this matter.

We appreciate your attention on this important issue. Should you have any questions for NPF please contact Amy Prentice, State Government Relations Manager at aprentice@psoriasis.org or 503-546-5551.

Sincerely,

Randy Beranek
President & CEO

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