May 8, 2018

Senator Joshua Miller, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
41 Talbot Manor
Cranston, RI 02905

RE: Support S 2859 (Gallo) with amendment – Relating to Insurance – Accident and Sickness Insurance Policies – Step Therapy Protocol

Dear Chairman Miller:

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 roughly 34,000 Rhode Island residents living with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

Step therapy, also known as ‘fail first’, is a health insurance mandate that is intended to control spending on prescription drugs. This tool requires patients to ‘fail first’, often multiple times, on certain medications before they are able to receive the treatment originally prescribed by their physician. All too often, this delays access to optimal therapy, while potentially exacerbating a patient’s condition.

As 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 NPF Medical Board 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 ensures that step therapy is based on the most current clinical data and that it is available to the consumer in a transparent manner. It also outlines clear and concise exceptions to the step therapy protocols based on medical necessity. Due to the importance of the exceptions process, it is critical that exception determination request be expeditiously granted – not considered, as shown in current draft language. With this update, the legislation, which is not a ban, would strike a fair balance between cost containment and health of the patient.

When considering S 2859 (Gallo) we ask that the committee amend the current language and report this measure favorably.

Sincerely,

Randy Beranek
President and CEO

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services