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The Honorable Senator Annette Cleveland

Chairwoman, Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee
JAC 220
PO Box 40449
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: GHLF Patient Group Supports House Bill 1879

Dear Chairwoman Cleveland,

The Global Healthy Living Foundation (GHLF) writes in support of House Bill 1879 and hope that it be voted on favorably by the committee. This legislation would ensure patients with rare, complex and/or incurable chronic conditions and/or mental illness have timely access to the necessary therapies prescribed by their clinician.

By way of background, GHLF is a 20-year-old 501(c)(3) patient organization reaching millions of chronically ill patients and their caregivers across the country through social media, community events and our online support and education. GHLF works to improve the quality of life for patients living with chronic disease by making sure their voices are heard and advocating for improved access to care at the local level. Our patients suffer from chronic conditions including arthritis, psoriasis, gastrointestinal disease, cardiovascular disease and migraine. As a result, these patients incur significant financial burden due to the high cost of the treatments that are necessary to manage their disease. And, it is on behalf of the patients we represent that we write to express the need for more protections for patients when insurers use step therapy and first fail policies.

Step therapy is an insurance cost-savings protocol that can cause negative outcomes for individuals living with chronic diseases and/or mental illness who rely on the treatment regimen recommended by their health care provider to manage their symptoms and improve overall quality of life. When a child or adult is told by his or her health care plan that they must first fail on a series of treatments before receiving the appropriate and originally prescribed medication, both physicians and patients are forced to compromise their treatment decisions. This dangerous insurance practice can be time consuming for doctors and their staff; the individual may experience negative health outcomes. Delays in treatment can not only worsen a patient's condition, but also increase overall costs to the state and the healthcare system.

House Bill 1879 would permit a prescribing physician to request a step therapy override determination from a health plan or insurer on behalf of a patient to ensure the individual has the best treatment option available. Due to a lack of transparency and patient safeguards in the state of Washington, patients living with various chronic conditions can suffer for weeks or even months before a decision is made by the insurer on whether a physician-approved treatment is authorized. This override will allow patients to succeed first by taking the therapeutically suspect practice of fail-first away from insurers.

Time is of the essence for those residents living with a condition that requires careful consideration in creating a successful treatment plan. For the reasons listed above, we respectfully ask that you support House Bill 1879. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this legislation and would be pleased to provide any further information that you may require.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corey Greenblatt', written in a cursive style.

Corey Greenblatt
Manager, Policy and Advocacy
Global Healthy Living Foundation

CC: Members of the Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee

