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June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Senator Betsy Johnson  
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and  
Means  
900 Court St.  
NE, S-209  
Salem, OR 97301

Representative Dan Rayfield  
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and  
Means  
900 Court St.  
NE, H-275  
Salem, OR 9730

Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward  
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
900 Court St.  
NE, S-213  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, and Rayfield,

The Global Healthy Living Foundation (GHLF) writes in support of Senate Bill 139, the Utilization Management Transparency act and hopes it is supported and brought up for a vote before the end of legislative session. 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 non-profit patient organization reaching millions of chronically ill patients and their caregivers across the country through social media, community events and 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 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.

Utilization Management protocols, such as prior authorization and step therapy often result in higher levels of administrative burden and can contribute to delayed treatment and negative patient outcomes. Prior authorization is a process that requires provider offices to ask permission from a patient's insurance company before performing certain medical procedures or prescribing certain medications; step therapy protocols require patients to try and fail certain therapies before qualifying for others. Senate Bill 139 seeks to ensure that if commercial payers employ such cost-containment programs, the process be transparent, efficient, and fair.

Senate Bill 139 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 Oregon, 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. Additionally, after much compromise with opponents of this legislation, we understand the bill will be fiscally neutral.

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 Senate Bill 139. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this legislation and would be pleased to provide any further information you may require.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Corey Greenblatt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Corey Greenblatt  
Manager, Policy and Advocacy  
Global Healthy Living Foundation

