

Statement for the Record

Representative Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR-5)

“Lowering Costs and Increasing Access to Health Care with Employer-Driven Innovation”

Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions

Committee on Education & the Workforce

Hearing held on January 11, 2024

I commend Subcommittee Chair Bob Good as well as my colleagues and staff for holding the hearing, “Lowering Costs and Increasing Access to Health Care with Employer-Driven Innovation.” As part of this important topic, I encourage the Committee to consider HR 2630, the Safe Step Act, which is a bill I sponsor with Representatives Brad Wenstrup (R-OH-2), Lucy McBath (D-GA-7), Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA-1), and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR-3).

Insurance-mandated step therapy is when a health plan requires patients to try and fail insurer-preferred treatments before the plan will cover the treatment initially selected by the patient and provider. When a step therapy protocol is medically inappropriate for an individual, it can delay access to needed care and lead to severe or irreversible health outcomes.

HR 2630, the Safe Step Act would ensure that employer plans offer a medically reasonable and expedient step therapy exceptions process. The bill is based on legislation passed in 36 states, and is supported by 218 patient and provider advocacy organizations.^{1 2} Despite the progress in the states, many individuals and families with employer plans remain unprotected.

The Safe Step Act will achieve our goals to lower costs and improve access to care in employer health plans. It is estimated that step therapy costs the U.S. health system \$93.3 billion every year.³ These costs include avoidable surgeries and hospitalizations that result from delaying needed treatments. These costs also include the administrative burden on providers. By creating a reasonable exceptions process, the Safe Step Act would enable health plans to continue to require step therapy while quickly side-stepping the instances in which step therapy protocols would lead to worse health outcomes and exacerbate costs.

I look forward to working with the Committee to mark up the Safe Step Act as part of this larger dialogue on how we can support employers in lowering costs and increasing patient access.

¹ <https://steptherapy.com/step-therapy-legislation-by-state/>

² <https://steptherapy.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Flyer-Safe-Step-Act.pdf>

³ https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.00036?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acr.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub++0pubmed