



February 16, 2017

Honorable Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health Care  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Senate Bill 526 - Support**

Dear Senator Monnes Anderson,

The Arthritis Foundation urges your support of Senate Bill 526 when it comes before your committee. This bill would help restore the balance between an insurer's oversight and the provider's discretion to ensure Oregon patients receive the most appropriate treatment for their condition. Senate Bill 526 would authorize a request for an override to an insurer's step therapy process for prescription drugs to be submitted, treated and responded to in a timely manner. Specifically, this bill would require that insurers respond to the override request within 72 hours or 24 hours in the case of a patient whose condition is in serious jeopardy without the prescribed drug.

Initially it may appear that the increased number of steps will lead to lower health care costs; however, excessive steps over a length of time will actually increase utilization of health care services in some patients. A study by the American Journal of Managed Care<sup>i</sup> looked at the effects antihypertensive step therapy has on prescription drug utilization, as well as other medical care utilization and spending. It found that "step therapy was associated with an increase in outpatient office visits and inpatient admissions... [and] emergency room visits [increased] with the amount of time elapsed since step therapy was implemented."

For patients with complex conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, it is critical to ensure they have timely access to medications that can put their disease into a low disease state or medicated remission. And for those patients that meet one of the criteria listed in SB 526 it could mean stopping their condition from causing irreversible damage and joint destruction.

On behalf of the more than 838,000 adults and 3,400 children living in Oregon with arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation strongly urges your support of SB 526 to ensure that providers have a say in what would be medically appropriate for their patient.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Schultz".

Steven Schultz  
Legislative Analyst  
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<sup>i</sup> **Mark, PhD** et al. *The Effects of Antihypertensive Step-Therapy Protocols on Pharmaceutical and Medical Utilization and Expenditures.* Am J of Manag Care 2009;15(2):123-131

cc:

Sen. Jeff Kruse, Vice Chair  
Members, Senate Committee on Health Care