

February 3rd, 2020

Greetings Chair Salinas and members of the House Committee on Healthcare,

My name is Kendra I live with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. I am here to advocate on behalf of the National Psoriasis Foundation and over 105,000 Oregonians living with psoriatic disease. Lack of care and prolonged treatment from step therapy has forced me out of the classroom as a teacher and severely impacted my life. I ask that you support protecting patients like me and increase their ability to access appropriate care by voting yes on HB 4102.

For the last 25 years I have battled to find relief from psoriasis. I started with plaque psoriasis on my elbows and knees and treated that with topical medications. Magically, the more obvious psoriasis cleared up but left me with moderate plaque psoriasis on my scalp, ears, and genitals. Only recently did I receive inverse psoriasis under my breasts and armpits.

For 20 years I found relief with a foam for my scalp, but when I had to change insurance I was denied. The process to regain access to this medication that I knew was effective took seven months; in the meantime, my public and private suffering took its toll. I learned that the demands of my own classroom exacerbated my autoimmune disease and for my health, I had to leave my classroom to get a handle on the pain in my neck, shoulders, and arms. In 2017 I was diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis, specifically enthesitis.

Finding a medication to control both my psoriasis and enthesitis presented challenges, but my doctor informed me that there are medications that work well for patients like me. Unfortunately, I could not try the medication my doctor knew would work best and was forced to go through step therapy. First, I was placed on a drug known to treat cancer, but not known to help enthesitis symptoms. Sure enough, after three months, no progress was made so my next required drug was a TNF inhibitor, which also does not control enthesitis. After a couple months, no progress was made in controlling my pain and other symptoms. After failing on these first two steps, I still could not take the medication my doctor recommended. This time, I was put on a drug that finally brought some relief. I no longer felt fatigue wash over me on a regular basis and “the edge was taken off of my pain,” although my enthesitis was not touched. It angered me to hear that my enthesitis pain might be solved, but step therapy was holding me hostage. I continue to struggle with the condition, though the pain has been helped through biologics.

No one should have to withstand months of mental and physical pain and be forced to lose their job because they are unable to get the proper treatment. I wish I could have just started a year ago with the biologics, I probably would have more information about my tricky body at this point.

My story is not unique, Oregon must provide guardrails and protections against Step Therapy for situations like mine, it is inhumane to make people suffer. This is why I encourage the committee to vote yes on HB 4102.

Kendra Wollert
Corvallis Resident