



SUPPORT Step Therapy Protocols HB 677 (Rep. Hall)/SB 1310 (Sen. Hensley)

For many people with mental illness, medication is an essential part of their treatment and can be a valuable tool in overall well-being.

Some insurers may use “step therapy” (or “fail first”) policies that require a person try one or more insurer-preferred medications unsuccessfully before they receive coverage for the medication that their doctor recommends.

When a health insurer requires step therapy, it can pose serious risks to a person taking mental health medications.

While step therapy is often promoted as a cost-savings strategy, policies that restrict access to medications can cause negative [outcomes](#), sometimes leading to emergency department visits, hospitalizations, homelessness or criminal justice involvement.

Why we support this legislation

The use of mental health medications is a decision made between an individual and their health care provider based on their symptoms, treatment history and consideration of side effects.

Mental health medications affect people — even those with the same diagnosis — differently, including varying levels of effectiveness and different side effects. Because of this, it is important that a person can access the medication that works best for them.

For some health conditions, people can switch to a different drug without problems. However, for people with mental health conditions, step therapy has unintended — **and sometimes dangerous** — consequences (such as suicidal ideation).

Policies should establish clear, rapid timelines outlining requests for exceptions and ensure that people who have previously used a medication do not have to switch. Bureaucratic red tape should not block a patient’s access to needed mental health medication.

The cost to individuals, families and communities when a person must fail on a medication before getting what they need is too high.

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