

TESTIMONY ON HB 785 - FAVORABLE
(Health Insurance – Step Therapy or Fail–First Protocol – Revisions)

My name is Christine Batta Fisher. I am a resident of District 47A living in Hyattsville, MD. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 785, titled Health Insurance – Step Therapy or Fail–First Protocol – Revisions.

I experienced the limitations of step therapy protocols for prescription drugs in my first year of being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I was required to choose one of the less expensive, less effective medications before other options would be covered by my insurance. The first medication I tried was a daily injectable drug which caused painful site reactions and it was a daily battle. When I learned the medication wasn't helping control my MS at all and that new lesions were still growing, it was devastating and that experience still causes me mental harm to this day. Only after trying that drug for almost a year was I able to get on a more successful monthly infusion treatment that controlled my MS well, had less side effects and didn't interrupt my daily life.

There are currently 25 FDA-approved disease modifying therapies listed on the National MS Society's website. The most effective treatments are very expensive. My hope is that more MS patients will have access to the best treatments available early on in their journey so they can quickly make an impact on their disease progression moving forward. That first year of having MS is so scary and it's so unfair to add to the challenging load of someone who is newly diagnosed.

Revising step therapy or fail-first protocols will help other MS patients like me avoid additional lesions, nerve damage as well as trauma and heart ache caused by being required to try less effective medications first.

Thank you,

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