



Testimony of The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Re: H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR

Appropriations Committee

Legislative Office Building, Room 2700

Hartford, CT 06106-1591

April 5, 2019

Chairwoman Osten, Chairwoman Walker, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the more than 18 million children and adults<sup>1</sup> in the United States suffering from atopic dermatitis (AD), also known as eczema, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America urges the Connecticut state legislature to pass legislation ensuring that any step therapy requirements enacted in Medicaid protect patients from medically harmful policies.

Atopic Dermatitis is a chronic and often severely debilitating inflammatory skin condition.<sup>2</sup> AD negatively impacts quality of life, due to itching, excessive dryness of skin, and sleep interruption. Among adults, AD is associated with lower self-assessed mental health scores, reduced social interactions, and lower quality of life. Children and adults with AD also face a higher risk of asthma and food allergies.

Though there is no cure for AD, a variety of treatments can control symptoms and improve quality of life. Given the variety of symptoms that present in individuals with AD, treatment is tailored to each individual patient and may include the use of over the counter medications, prescription topical drugs, phototherapy, or biologics. As the symptoms of AD are often so debilitating for those living with the disease, sustained and effective treatment is imperative to maintaining quality of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Atopic Dermatitis. National Eczema Association. <https://nationaleczema.org/eczema/types-of-eczema/atopic-dermatitis/>

<sup>2</sup> Silberbeg JI, et al. Patient burden and quality of life in atopic dermatitis in US adults. *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*. 2018. [https://www.annallergy.org/article/S1081-1206\(18\)30567-2/fulltext](https://www.annallergy.org/article/S1081-1206(18)30567-2/fulltext)



We are concerned about the proposed expansion of step therapy, or “fail first” policies to AD in the Connecticut Medicaid program. Step therapy, without proper consumer and patient protections, have the potential to delay and restrict access to medically necessary and effective drugs and treatments.<sup>3,4</sup>

We therefore request that you implement policies to ensure that any measure incorporating step therapy for AD into Medicaid include the following patient protections:

- Step therapy protocols should be based on evidence-based treatment guidelines. Step therapy should begin with the recognized standard of care under these guidelines, even if that treatment is not the least expensive.
- Patients currently using effective therapy must be permitted to maintain that treatment even if it is not the least expensive.
- Providers must be able to request waiver of step therapy requirements for patients who tried a drug at an earlier date, including in a different plan year, to avoid having patients repeat a treatment known to be ineffective for them.
- There must be a simple and timely exceptions and appeals process to ensure rapid consideration of providers’ documented reasons for recommending access to a drug otherwise subject to step therapy.
- Enrollees and providers should receive clear and timely information about any step therapy requirements and the exceptions and appeals process.

Thank you for the opportunity to recommend these policies to protect children and adults with AD and ensure a transparent and effective process for both patients and providers. If you have any questions, please contact Kenneth Mendez at [kmendez@aafa.org](mailto:kmendez@aafa.org).

Sincerely,

Kenneth Mendez,  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

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<sup>3</sup> Krempsey E. I’ve been forced to go through ‘step therapy.’ Don’t make Medicare Part B participants do that. *STAT*. <https://www.statnews.com/2018/12/11/remove-step-therapy-medicare-part-b/>

<sup>4</sup> Sachs R. Drug Pricing Policy: HHS Introduces Step Therapy in Medicare Advantage. *Health Affairs*. 2018. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20180813.864351/full/>