



February 11, 2018

Vicki Schmidt
Chairwoman Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St, Room 441-E
Topeka, Kansas 6612

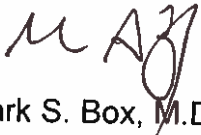
To the Honorable Vicki Schmidt

My name is Dr. Mark Box and I am a rheumatologist practicing in the Kansas City area. I am the president of the Midwest Rheumatology Society and represent the rheumatology community in the Kansas City Metropolitan area. I additionally serve on the Board of Directors of the Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations. This is an organization that represents state rheumatology societies. I serve as the chairman of the Leadership Board for the Arthritis Foundation in the Kansas City Metropolitan area. I am testifying in favor of senate bill SB 304. This is a bill promoting oversight for step therapy in the prescribing of medication. As a rheumatologist, I prescribe many complex and expensive medications for treatment of severe and life-threatening autoimmune diseases. These therapies have proven to be revolutionary in treating patients with these complex diseases. Step therapy has become an increasing burden and, in many cases, an impediment to appropriate medical care for these patients. Senate Bill 304 promotes passage of improved step therapy for the citizens of Kansas. At this point, there are few regulations on step therapy and insurers can implement step therapy protocols without demonstrating that they are safe or effective for patient care. It is my belief that state should implement basic standards and regulatory oversight for step programs to assure that they are medically sound and in the best interest of the patients. Senate Bill 304 ensures that step programs are safe for patients, clinically grounded, and transparent to both patients and health care providers in terms of the requirements for prescribing medications covered by step therapy. The bill ensures that step therapy programs are based on clinical guidelines developed and endorsed by multidisciplinary panel of experts. It assures that exception process for step therapy is transparent and accessible to both patients and health care providers. As it stands now many times insurance companies do not inform physicians of the rules for step therapy

and create needless and sometimes endless amounts of paperwork rather than clearly outlining the steps that are required for the prescription of a given medication. The bill additionally establishes a basic framework for when insurance must exempt patients from step therapy. We believe that it is very important that the patients who have previously tried and failed medications or that they have been deemed ineffective in the past should not be forced to repeat step therapy when insurances are changed or when the formulary is changed. When the patient is stable on the drug especially those with very life-threatening and critical illnesses, it is important that the therapy be maintained uninterrupted. This is a part of patient safety and appropriate medical care. This bill does not prevent insurers from using step therapy or limiting the number of the allowed steps and does not prevent insurers from requiring prior authorization before covering the drug. It also does not prevent insurers from requiring the patients to try generic drugs if it is equivalent to the brand before prescribing the brand name drug. It; however, does improve the process of getting patients the appropriate medications that in many cases can prove to be lifesaving and prevent complications that may increase medical care.

I hope that this information can help the committee in passing this very important bill for Kansas citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Box'.

Mark S. Box, M.D.