



**Senate Medicaid Committee
Wednesday, December 7, 2016**

**Written Testimony of Miranda Creviston Motter
President and CEO, Ohio Association of Health Plans**

On behalf of the Ohio Association of Health Plans (OAHP), thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on Senate Bill 243.

The Ohio Association of Health Plans (OAHP) is the leading state trade association representing the health insurance industry. OAHP members provide health benefits to more than 9 million Ohioans through employer-sponsored coverage, the individual insurance market, and public programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and the Health Insurance Exchange marketplace. Our members offer a broad range of health insurance products to Ohioans in the commercial marketplace and are committed partners in public programs.

Senate Bill 243, as currently drafted, would restrict a health plan's ability to utilize step therapy protocols for prescription drug coverage. Step therapy programs are valuable tools used by insurers to ensure that the safest, most cost-effective drugs are used before having to turn to riskier and more costly pharmaceuticals. Step therapy programs administered by Ohio's health plans are developed in alignment with FDA guidelines and clinical evidence.

Imposing further restrictions on step therapy protocols threatens to increase health care costs for consumers and small business owners who maintain health care coverage for their employees. Tools such as these are especially important in today's health care landscape, as prescription drug costs continue to soar. Since July of this year, stories of pharmaceutical companies increasing prices for both new and old, brand and generic drugs, have become mainstays in news cycles across the country. Unfortunately, these stories of overnight, astronomical drug increases are becoming the norm rather than the exception.

We understand that one of the core objectives of this bill is to allow consumers access to more expensive drugs. OAHP believes that drug transparency might be a more meaningful solution to that core objective. Legislation that would restrict a health plan's efforts to mitigate the high cost of drug treatment for Ohioans appears to run counter to that underlying goal.

Moreover, step therapy's real positive impact is on the consumer. Aside from relieving individuals and families of some of the financial burden of certain drug regimens, step therapy also is important because it helps to ensure patient safety. Such programs encourage providers and patients alike to pursue evidence-based treatments that gauge a patient's response to less dangerous drugs before transitioning them to more potent - and potentially harmful - medications. Step therapy is especially beneficial when it comes to potentially addictive and abused drugs. These programs are used by insurers as an avenue to provide enhanced disease management while reducing overmedication and running risk of exposing individuals to highly addicted drugs.



On behalf of the Ohio Association of Health Plans, I ask that as you deliberate on this bill, that you thoughtfully consider the many ways in which step therapy benefits Ohioans in regards to their overall health and health care costs. And, ultimately, we urge you to vote against Senate Bill 243.

OAHP and its member plans stand ready to work with state policymakers as we worked to achieve the shared goal of enacting health care reforms that lower costs and improve quality for all Ohioans.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of OAHP and its member plans.