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Testimony of Todd Falcone, M.D.

On behalf of the

CT ENT Society

CT Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery Society

CT Society of Eye Physicians

CT Urology Society

**In Support of Proposed Bill 5859 AN ACT PROHIBITING CERTAIN HEALTH CARRIERS FROM  
REQUIRING THE USE OF STEP THERAPY FOR COVERED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS THAT ARE  
PRESCRIBED TO TREAT CANCER.**

Good Morning Senators Lesser, Kelly Representative Scanlon and Pavalock-DAmato, and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. My name is Todd Falcone, M.D. and I am a board certified Otolaryngologist practicing in Hartford, CT. I am here today on behalf of over 1000 physicians practicing in this state from the above specialty medical Societies to speak in support of the language and intent of Proposed Bill No. 5859, An Act Prohibiting Certain Health Carriers from Requiring the Use of Step Therapy for Covered Prescription Drugs that are prescribed to Treat Cancer.

We would like to thank this committee for raising this important piece of legislation for our patients who are diagnosed with various forms of cancer and for our colleagues in oncology who see the majority of these cancer patients. Recent data by the AMA has shown Step therapy policies are generally inappropriate in oncology due to the individualized nature of modern cancer treatment and the general lack of interchangeable clinical options. It is important to note that the American Society for Clinical Oncology stresses that Step therapy does not support the basic premise that "Medically appropriate cancer care demands patient access to the most appropriate drug at the most appropriate time."

Furthermore, many of the insurers implementing Step therapies are not digitized to expedite the process to ensure patients get prompt and efficient access to needed treatments.

Requiring patients to try and fail suboptimal treatments jeopardizes the health of patients, potentially resulting in dangerous and harmful consequences. In some instances, health plans force patients to return to the same treatments that have proven to be ineffective when tried previously under a different health plan, or when the formulary changes. The decision to change plans may occur through no fault of the



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patients but rather an employer's decision to change plans.

Further, Step therapy interferes with the patient-physician relationship by preventing physicians from prescribing drugs they know will provide the best treatment in the most effective manner. RB 5859 ensures that the health care provider's right to make treatment decisions in the best interest of the patient, particularly in the setting of optimal treatments for disabling, chronic or life-threatening diseases or conditions like cancer, will be preserved. Physicians know their patients' medical histories, which enables them to identify potential contraindications and life-threatening adverse reactions. Retaining physicians' medical judgment in patients' treatment plans is a cost-effective way to prevent health care dollars from being used on medications that are not effective. It also prevents patients making multiple visits to their physician and wasting money and invaluable time on prescription medications or cancer therapies that do not work.

Another related and pertinent issue is prior authorization barriers that are designed to impede payment and delay implementation of medically necessary procedures. For your review we have provided Addendum B- Consensus Statement on Improving the Prior Authorization Process. We request that this committee will consider adding language to any Step therapy bill moving forward to prevent and protect patients and physicians from prior authorization policies designed solely to add time-consuming administrative burden, and hamper appropriate and timely patient care.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this important public health issue and have attached Addendum A- CMS Policy and letter to Medicare Advantage plans highlighting proper policy with regard to Step therapies.

We urge your support for RB 5859 and appreciate your time and consideration on this important piece of legislation. As physicians, our number one priority is the health and welfare of our patients. This legislation will improve access and timely availability to prescription medications that are in the best interest of the patient.