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Connecticut State Medical Society Testimony in Support of House 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
Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 21, 2019

Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, on behalf of the physicians and physician-in-training members of Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS) thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you today on House 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

House Bill 5859 attempts to address issues of significance to physicians and their patients in Connecticut that were also contained in unsuccessful legislation proposed during the 2013 legislative session. First, the bill attempts to limit the use of “Step Therapy.” Step Therapy is a situation in which health insurers and other payors attempt to unilaterally dictate the use of medically necessary medications prescribed by a physicians without real knowledge of the patient or the patient’s medical condition or treatment, this often includes the requirement to first use over the counter medications in a situation where the physician clearly understands the patient’s needs and knows the prescribed medication necessary to improve the health of the patient. Unfortunately, step therapies are dictated solely by cost without consideration of the clinical judgment of the physician who knows the patient best.

The bill before you today is a step in the right direction in safeguarding patients in ensuring that decisions to prescribe and utilize prescribed medications cancer are based first and foremost on the clinical judgment of physicians providing the medical care and on not driven by cost factors determined by insurers or others.

We have consistently testified before this and other committees regarding the issue of medical necessity which is paramount to the issue of physician prescribing and step therapy. It is our policy that any service, and in this situation, it is about medication, deemed medically necessary by a physician should be covered under insurance policies for the care and treatment of patients. Insurers insure patients against the expense of the high cost of unforeseen medical expenses while physicians provide medically necessary care for the prevention, maintenance and care of their patients. Step therapy only serves as a barrier to the determination of medical necessity by a physician in consultation with the patient. Although Step Therapy increases administrative burdens and creates barriers to appropriate care, these concerns pale in comparison to those of patient safety and well-being through unnecessary delays and the required delivery of ineffective therapies.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the committee to strengthen language to ensure that physician clinical judgment is not infringed upon by health insurers and that medically necessary medications are covered when prescribed by physicians.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today.