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NASPGHAN Annual Meeting
November 4-6-2021
Nashville, TN

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Raul Ruiz
2342 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lucy McBath
1513 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Brad Wenstrup
2419 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mariannette Miller-Meeks
1716 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Ruiz, Wenstrup, McBath and Miller-Meeks:

The North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is pleased to offer its endorsement of the *Safe Step Act* (H.R 2163) to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to require a group health plan (or health insurance coverage offered in connection with such a plan) to provide an exceptions process for any medication step therapy protocol.

NASPGHAN is comprised of more than 2,500 pediatric gastroenterologists in 46 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Mexico and eight provinces in Canada. The mission of NASPGHAN is to advance understanding of normal development, physiology and pathophysiology of diseases of the gastrointestinal tract (i.e., digestive disease), liver and pancreas in children, improve the quality of care for these children with digestive disease by fostering the dissemination of this knowledge through scientific meetings, professional and public education, and policy development, and serve as an effective voice for members and the profession.

Increasingly, payors are requiring step therapy, prior authorization, and non-medical drug switching for biologic therapies used in children with inflammatory bowel disease, often overriding prescribing recommendations of the treating physician. Most concerning is payors requiring pediatric patients who are stable on a biologic to switch to a different biologic, or typically what is called a biosimilar; requiring a limited choice of initial biologic; or designating the sequence of biologic therapies.


These decisions by payors are typically made without regard to medical necessity or clinical indications and without input from the primary pediatric gastroenterologist caring for the child.

We are specifically grateful your legislation would create an exception to medication step-therapy when a patient is stable on a medication previously approved. This exception will allow pediatric patients who are stable on a specific biologic therapy to remain on that biologic if that is the recommendation of the treating physician.

Pediatric gastroenterologists are spending entirely too much time fighting with insurance companies to ensure their patients get recommended care. NASPGHAN stands ready to work with you achieve enactment of the *Safe Step Act* this year.

Should you have questions or require additional information, please contact Camille Bonta, NASPGHAN policy advisor, at (202) 320-3658 or cbonta@summithealthconsulting.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Benjamin D. Gold".

Benjamin D. Gold, MD, FAAP, FACP
President
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition