



**AMERICAN ACADEMY of
DERMATOLOGY | ASSOCIATION**

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September 25, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Doug Jones (D-AL)
U.S. Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD (R-LA)
U.S. Senate
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Jones, and Senator Cassidy:

The American Academy of Dermatology Association (Academy), which represents more than 13,800 dermatologists nationwide, is pleased to offer its support for the Senate introduction of the S. 2546, the "Safe Step Act." This legislation would be a critical step to ensure patients have access to their prescription medicines. S. 2546 would require health insurers to expeditiously grant a step therapy override determination request if, in the professional judgment of the prescribing physician, the step therapy requirement would be medically inappropriate for that patient.

Step therapy protocols, a cost containment tool used by health insurance plans, require patients to try one or more prescription drugs before coverage is provided for a drug selected by the patient's health care provider. The Academy understands the need to contain health care costs, but we are concerned that step therapy strategies to medication and other treatment selection have the potential to impact patient outcomes and quality of life. Step therapy prevents dermatologists from prescribing drugs they know will provide the best treatment results in the most expeditious manner. Requiring patients to try and fail treatments jeopardizes the health of patients who may have an adverse reaction, potentially resulting in dangerous consequences, after taking an inappropriate drug.

S. 2546 would ensure that step therapy protocols used by health plans will preserve the health care provider's right to make treatment decisions in the best interest of the patient. Physicians know their patients' medical history, which enables them to identify potential contraindications and life-threatening adverse reactions. Retaining physicians' medical judgement in patients' treatment plans

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is a cost-effective way to prevent health care dollars from being used on medications that are not effective. It also prevents patients from a prolonged treatment that includes scheduling multiple visits to their physician and spending money on prescription medications that are not effective.

We appreciate your effort to protect the patient-physician relationship. As physicians, our number one priority is the health and welfare of our patients. The enactment of this legislation will improve access to prescription medications that are in the best interest of the patient. For further information, please contact Christine O'Connor, Associate Director, Congressional Policy, at coconnor@aad.org or (202) 609-6330.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "George Hruza". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "G" and a distinct "Hruza" ending.

George J. Hruza, MD MBA FAAD
President, American Academy of Dermatology Association