



*The Maryland State Medical Society*

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**MEDCHI APPLAUDS GOVERNOR O'MALLEY, LEGISLATURE FOR ENACTING BILL THAT WILL HELP PROTECT MARYLAND PATIENTS FROM HARMFUL HEALTH INSURANCE PRACTICES**

*Governor Signs Bill That Will Address Dangerous "Step Therapy," Health Insurer Protocol That Jeopardizes Patient Access to Quality Treatment*

BALTIMORE, May 5, 2014 — MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, today commended Governor O'Malley and Maryland legislators for enacting SB 622/HB1233, a bill that addresses a dangerous health insurance practice known as "step therapy." Step therapy or "fail first" policies jeopardize patient health by requiring patients to try and fail on up to five older, less effective treatments before the insurer will cover the treatment originally prescribed by a patient's doctor.

"MedChi applauds Governor O'Malley and the legislature for enacting this critical patient protection legislation and for taking steps to curb the impact of egregious step therapy practices on the health of Maryland patients," said MedChi CEO Gene Ransom. "Health insurance barriers like step therapy jeopardize patient health and remove decisions about how best to treat patients from the hands of doctors. Because of the leadership of Sen. Mac Middleton and Del. Eric Bromwell, Maryland patients will have to endure fewer unnecessary delays before gaining access to their doctor-prescribed course of treatment."

SB 622/HB1233 had broad support from both doctors and patient groups. The Maryland Health Care Commission recently studied step therapy, and Sen. Thomas Middleton (D-Charles) and Delegate Eric Bromwell (D-Baltimore) introduced the legislation to codify some of the MHCC recommendations. The Middleton/Bromwell legislation prevents insurers from forcing patients who are already being effectively treated on a medication to undergo the step therapy process and also prohibits insurers from forcing patients to try medicine the FDA has not approved for treatment of a specific condition. Maryland is the first state in the country to enact the latter provision.

"Insurance protocols such as step therapy can result in significant delays in treatment, unnecessary suffering for patients, and increased health care costs," said MedChi Legislative Co-chair Gary Pushkin, M.D. "MedChi applauds Maryland legislators for prioritizing the health of their constituents over insurance special interests by passing this common-sense legislation."

Evidence suggests that step therapy may increase overall health care costs. Patients forced to manage multiple insurer "steps" often endure additional trips to the doctor or pharmacy, with additional time off from work or child care. When patient treatment is unnecessarily delayed, patient health deteriorates and manageable conditions devolve into more difficult to manage diseases.

For more information about MedChi or its efforts to help curb health insurer abuses, visit [www.medchi.org](http://www.medchi.org).

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. Formed in 1799, it is still the largest physician organization in Maryland today. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit [www.medchi.org](http://www.medchi.org).