

The Honorable Della Au Belatti, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
& Members of the House Committee on Health and Homelessness
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Wednesday
March 20, 2024

Testimony in Support of HCR No. 225, Requesting the Auditor to Conduct a Social and Financial Assessment of Proposed Mandatory Health Insurance Coverage for Step Therapy Requirements for Stage Two Through Stage Five Cancer.

Many, if not most of us, have been touched by friends or relatives diagnosed with cancer. Although we are making strides in the fight against this insidious disease, the battle for survival is often hampered by prerequisites of health insurance providers. Such was the case for a close friend and colleague who, were it not for step therapy mandates, might not have lost her life to breast cancer. Her mother stood by hopeful but helpless as her young daughter was denied coverage for drugs that could have prolonged or even saved her life. Instead, step therapy requirements enabled the cancer to spread to a point where the alternative treatment was no longer a viable option. She was subjected to step therapy requirements in 2017. She did not live to spend Christmas with her family in 2018.

Friends who were with her during her struggle for survival were saddened and dismayed over a policy that obviously did not put the patient's chances for survival above economic concerns. We lobbied for a change in the law in 2019. HB 216 was heard by the House Health Committee on January 29th that year, and in March we testified in support of SB493. House and Senate Conferees were assigned but failed to meet. This year we testified in support of H.B. 2194, hopeful for a change in the rules.

Although the measure was deferred, we are grateful that the effort is moving forward in the form of a Resolution. We are also hopeful that the impact assessment conducted by the Auditor will result in a change that will *"increase the likelihood of proactive treatment of cancer and save lives"*. We have no doubt that many lives hang in the balance. The report of the Auditor's findings and recommendations as requested in Concurrent Resolution 225 could very well tip the balance in favor of their survival.

Mahalo,
Laura Figueira
59-288 Kamehameha Hwy
Haleiwa, HI 96712

