

## **NYS ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS APPLAUDS NEW STEP THERAPY REFORM LAW WHICH PUTS PATIENTS FIRST**

Albany, NY (January 3, 2017)

Just before 2016 came to a close on December 31st, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law legislation to help ensure patients have access to the needed medications their doctors prescribe by injecting fairness and transparency into insurer step therapy or “fail first” policies.

“The New York State Academy of Family Physicians commends Governor Cuomo for his leadership in putting patients first by approving legislation to protect patients from the inappropriate and harmful use of fail first protocols which can lead to disease progression, health deterioration, serious side effects and other harmful consequences,” said Robert Ostrander, MD, President.

Step therapy is a process whereby patients are denied access to medications prescribed by their physicians. Under step therapy, the patient must first try other drugs and fail to improve before the plan will pay for the drug initially prescribed by a physician — even if the patient is already stable on the drug.

The legislation, S.3419-C/A2834D, sponsored by Senator Catharine Young and Assembly Member Matthew Titone, was passed unanimously by the Legislature in June. It regulates the industry practice known as “step therapy” or fail first by including a standardized appeals process and expedited timeframes for insurers to respond to appeal requests.

Over the last several years, the Academy worked closely with nearly 80 other organizations representing patients and medical professionals as well as the bill sponsors to make this critically needed protection a reality.

“Our family physician members frequently encounter insurer step therapy requirements. Plans are willing to permit harm to the patient to protect against paying for drugs that can alleviate symptoms and improve health,” said Dr. Ostrander. “This is wrong and due to the strong leadership of Governor Cuomo, Senator Young, Assemblyman Titone and the entire State Legislature, new guard rails have been put in place to prevent insurers from applying step therapy inappropriately.”

“This new law puts the best interest of patients first and makes our family physician members proud to live and practice in New York State,” added Dr. Ostrander.