

## **Written Testimony of Eleni Nackos, MD**

**Medical Oncologist**

**New England Cancer Specialists**

### **In Support of LD 178 – Step Therapy Reform for Advanced Metastatic Cancer**

My name is Dr. Eleni Nackos. I am a medical oncologist at New England Cancer Specialists, where I work through the Center for Breast Health. Over the course of my career, I have treated countless patients living with advanced metastatic breast cancer. I am here today to testify in strong support of LD 178, a bill that will prohibit the use of step therapy protocols for those fighting advanced metastatic cancer.

Step therapy, or “fail-first,” policies require patients to try and fail on a health plan's preferred drug before they can access the treatment their doctor has prescribed. These policies prioritize cost savings and short-term profits for insurers, often at the expense of patients' lives. For patients with advanced metastatic cancer, these delays are not just an inconvenience—they can be deadly.

### **Real Lives at Risk**

In my practice, I have witnessed the devastating consequences of step therapy. Too many patients, faced with denial of timely access to life-extending therapies, have seen their disease progress unchecked while being required to fail on ineffective treatments. Some of these patients have succumbed to their cancer without ever having had the chance to try the therapy we knew would be most effective for them.

Metastatic cancer is a complex and aggressive disease. It requires highly individualized treatment plans. For example, stage four metastatic breast cancer has a five-year survival rate of just 30%. In these cases, every day matters. Step therapy forces patients to endure bureaucratic hurdles and unnecessary treatment failures instead of receiving the care they need when they need it most.

### **Step Therapy's True Cost**

The human cost of step therapy is tragic, but the financial impact is also significant. A recent study found that step therapy protocols can actually increase insurers' overall costs by 37% due to worsened patient outcomes, emergency interventions, and increased hospitalizations. These policies exacerbate the suffering of patients and their families while ultimately failing to deliver the cost savings insurers claim to pursue.

### **A Critical Step Forward**

LD 178 will prevent health plans from requiring patients with advanced metastatic cancer to fail on insurer-preferred drugs before accessing FDA-approved therapies recommended by their

healthcare providers. This bill is vital to ensuring that physicians like myself can provide the best possible care without harmful delays imposed by insurer-driven protocols.

No patient should have to lose precious time or hope because of a policy designed to prioritize profits over their survival. I urge you to pass LD 178 and protect the lives of patients with advanced cancer.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Respectfully submitted,**

*Dr. Eleni Nackos*

*New England Cancer Specialists*

*Center for Breast Health*

Eleni Nackos  
New England Cancer Specialists  
LD 178

Testimony attached for Dr. Eleni Nackos, Medical Oncologist at New England  
Cancer Specialists - In support of LD178.