

Written Testimony Supporting LD 178

***Submitted to the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee
2-5-2025***

Chair Bailey, Chair Mathieson and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 178, an act regarding coverage for step therapy for advanced metastatic cancer. My name is Shawna Ackley and I am a resident of Cumberland County.

I am deeply connected to the cancer community. It started with the Maine Cancer Foundation's *Tri for Cure*, where I've participated for the past 10 years. My journey took on a new and personal meaning a little over three years ago when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. In addition to my own experience, I have served on the board of the New England Breast Cancer Alliance and volunteered as an advocacy ambassador for Susan G. Komen. Over the last few years, I have participated in various cancer efforts to advocate for patients and support vital cancer causes and access to affordable care. Through this journey, I've met so many incredible people—some battling breast cancer, like I did, and others fighting metastatic breast cancer. I advocate for them today because their struggles, their experiences, and their lives matter.

Patients living with metastatic breast cancer face unimaginable challenges daily, fighting for their lives with every moment. One of the most devastating issues they face is when a treatment that is working—prescribed by their doctor and providing positive results—becomes unavailable due to insurance changes. With no cure, every moment counts, and the “fail-first” approach, or step therapy, only worsens this reality. If a treatment is working, it should not be interrupted or replaced due to insurance protocols. Step therapy forces patients into unnecessary delays and trial-and-error processes, often making them start over with less effective treatments, jeopardizing their survival.

This situation highlights a critical issue: insurance companies should not have the power to determine a patient's treatment plan. Decisions about what's best for a patient should be made between the patient and their doctor—not by a third-party insurance provider.

As a breast cancer survivor, I know that the reality is, we never know when our lives could change. It could be any one of us—or someone we love—who faces a metastatic cancer diagnosis tomorrow. What we do know is that we have a responsibility to protect those who are most vulnerable. We must stand together to ensure that step therapy protocols are prohibited for metastatic cancer patients.

Their lives matter. Their treatment choices matter. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support LD 178 and cast your vote in favor of passing this critical legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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