



# ENSURING ACCESS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE HEALTH

Testimony submitted on behalf of the  
Ensuring Access through Collaborative Health Coalition

to the

Washington State Health Care Authority  
Prescription Drug Affordability Board Meeting  
July 15, 2024

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the board on the drug selection process, specifically on how the board will evaluate therapeutic alternatives as part of a drug review. We share the board's goal to lower costs for patients and applaud your efforts to ensure patients have access to the care and therapies they need to manage their health.

It is critical, however, that the board understands that for many patients with chronic conditions, medications considered to be therapeutic alternatives are not actually viable alternatives for them personally. Therefore, we strongly urge the board to carefully consider this when determining how therapeutic alternatives will be evaluated for drug selection and review. We urge you to reject actions that could limit treatment options for these patients.

**Medicine is Not One-Size-Fits-All** Once diagnosed with a chronic condition, each patient starts an often life-long journey to identify the correct treatments and regimens to successfully manage their symptoms and improve their health. Many will also face multiple chronic conditions or need medications to treat specific symptoms or even side effects of their preferred treatment. For these reasons, patients with chronic conditions often rely on a complicated and personalized course of treatment that is not easily altered.

For these patients, therapeutic alternatives may not be alternatives at all. Very often drug interactions or other health conditions prevent individual patients from being able to switch to an alternative medication that, on paper, appears to be an appropriate treatment. Further, patients with chronic conditions can build up a tolerance to medications over time, so they must retain access to all treatments in a class of drugs to prolong their treatment.

**Patient Access Cannot Be Compromised** Ultimately, chronic conditions are incredibly complex to treat. Each patient will face a unique experience and should be able to work with their doctor to identify the treatment that works best for them. Substituting or requiring patients to change drugs based on cost considerations, instead of medical needs, can disrupt the continuity of care and result in complications and higher overall medical costs. We urge this board to seriously consider the unique circumstances faced by these patients and work diligently to ensure that access to all treatments is protected.

As patient advocates, we are concerned that drug reviews that focus on one medication at a time, rather than evaluating the patient experience, could complicate patient care and compromise access to the best treatment options.

We strongly urge the board and staff to fully explore with all healthcare stakeholders how drug reviews could adversely impact patients and implement appropriate safeguards to prevent these unintended consequences. We look forward to working with you to create the best outcomes for patients. For questions or follow-ups, please contact Tiffany Westrich-Robertson at [tiffany@aiarthrititis.org](mailto:tiffany@aiarthrititis.org).