ALLIANCE FOR
Gout Awareness

February 5, 2025

The Honorable Mike Klimesh
Senate Health and Human Services
Committee Chair
Iowa State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319

The Honorable Annette Sweeney
Senate Health and Human Services
Iowa State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319

The Honorable Trone Garriott
Senate Health and Human Services
Iowa State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319

RE: Bill SSB 1074 – Reform for Copay Accumulator Programs

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee:

On behalf of the Alliance for Gout Awareness, I am writing in support of Bill SSB 1074. This legislation addresses the impact of pharmacy benefit managers on prescription drug pricing. While the Alliance for Gout Awareness supports the broader bill of SSB 1074, we want to emphasize the cost-sharing provision in particular, which is necessary to ensure that patients living with gout in Iowa can utilize copay assistance to access and afford the treatments they need to manage their condition without the risk of surprise out-of-pocket costs.

About Gout and The Alliance for Gout Awareness

Gout is a chronic form of inflammatory arthritis affecting more than 12 million Americans.[1] Gout occurs due to a buildup of uric acid in the body. When excess uric acid builds up in the body, it deposits around joints and can lead to swollen joints and sudden, intensely painful attacks that can be debilitating.[2] It is a chronic medical condition that, left untreated, can result in more frequent or painful attacks and joint damage.[3] It can also increase patients' risk for other severe medical conditions such as kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and stroke.[4]

The Alliance for Gout Awareness (AGA) aims to reduce stigma and empower patients by improving public understanding of gout. AGA collaborates with our network of member organizations to heighten public awareness, address common misconceptions, and encourage patients to acknowledge the disease's impact and seek appropriate treatment.

Copay Accumulator Programs are a Significant Barrier to Gout Treatment

Insurers often use a variety of approaches to manage costs—often at the expense of gout patients' health. One tactic, known as a "copay accumulator program," allows patients to utilize copay cards, but prohibits these payments from counting toward patients' deductible, or annual out-of-

[1] Trends in Prevalence of Gout Among US Asian Adults, 2011-2018 | Rheumatology | JAMA Network Open | JAMA Network
[2] Alliance for Gout Awareness. What is Gout? https://goutalliance.org/what-is-gout/
[3] Alliance for Gout Awareness. When Gout Goes Untreated. https://goutalliance.org/resources/when-gout-goes-untreated/
[4] Arthritis Foundation Comorbid Conditions and Gout. https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/about-arthritis/related-conditions/other-diseases/five-conditions-linked-with-gout

pocket cost. This impacts treatment access and affordability by restricting the benefits that copay assistance can provide a patient. These programs can force patients to ration their medication or stop treatment altogether due to cost, which can exacerbate their condition. As newer, more innovative drugs can be more costly, it is important that patients can utilize copay assistance to afford treatments prescribed by their providers.[5]

While gout is not curable, it is treatable when approached from a holistic view of managing acute gout flares and addressing the root cause of chronic gout. Gout is a systemic disease that requires providers to utilize therapies to relieve flare symptoms and decrease the amount of uric acid in the blood. Continuous access to care is critical to ensure gout patients can successfully manage their disease. [6] This emphasizes the need for patients to be protected against the surprise out-of-pocket costs associated with copay accumulator programs in order to limit the risk of poor health outcomes.

Bill SSB 1074 Supports Treatment Accessibility and Affordability for Patients in Iowa

Bill SSB 1074 protects patients against surprise out-of-pocket costs by ensuring that all payments, including those made with copay assistance, count towards patients' out-of-pocket maximums, thus supporting treatment accessibility and affordability. As a result, patients can proactively and effectively manage their condition.

On behalf of the Alliance for Gout Awareness, thank you for your leadership on this important issue and for supporting patient access. If we can provide further details or answer any questions, please reach out to Kayla Roddey at kroddey@allianceforpatientaccess.org.

Sincerely,

The Alliance for Gout Awareness

[5] Alliance for Gout Awareness. A Roadmap to Better Care for Gout. https://goutalliance.org/resources/a-roadmap-to-better-care-for-gout/

[6] Alliance for Gout Awareness. The Journey Toward Disease Management: A National Survey of Gout Patients. https://goutalliance.org/resources/the-journey-toward-disease-management-a-national-survey-of-gout-patients/