

VIA EMAIL and U.S. MAIL

February 14, 2011

The Honorable Senator Abbie Cornett
State Capitol, Room 1116
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Reference: Support for LB 322

Dear Senator Cornett:

I'm writing to you in reference to LB 322 which will help ensure privately insured Nebraskans have access to reasonable prescription drug benefits. We support this bill because it will protect patients from out-of-pocket costs that prevent them from accessing the therapies they rely upon to maintain healthy, productive lives.

The Plasma Protein Therapeutics Association (PPTA) represents the world's leading manufacturers of plasma-derived and recombinant biological therapies, collectively known as plasma protein therapies, and the collectors of source plasma. These critical therapies are infused or injected by more than 1 million people worldwide to treat a variety of rare, life threatening diseases and serious medical disorders. PPTA members produce in excess of 80 percent of the plasma protein therapies used in the United States today and more than 60 percent worldwide.

Plasma protein therapies treat rare, life-threatening diseases and disorders. Lifesaving therapies produced by PPTA members include clotting factor therapies for individuals with bleeding disorders, immunoglobulins (IG) to treat complex diseases in persons with compromised immune systems and neurological disorders, and therapies for individuals who have alpha-1 anti-trypsin deficiency, which typically manifests as adult onset chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and substantially limits life expectancy.

Study after study shows that many diseases requiring high cost care have the potential to destroy a family's financial solvency or threaten their ability to take a necessary medication. While we agree that patients should be prudent purchasers in the health care marketplace, specialty tiers are contrary to the original purpose of insurance, which was the spreading of costs amongst both the healthy and the ill. Specialty tiers create a structure where those who are sickest pay far more for their essential therapies, and those who are relatively healthy pay less for theirs.

PPTA opposes specialty tiers because they go against one of our Patient Access Principles that states patients deserve access to appropriate public and private health insurance coverage regardless of health or disability, employment status, age, or medical predisposition. Specifically, PPTA urges state governments to adopt legislation

and/or regulations that protect patients from health insurance company practices that impose punitive cost-sharing requirements upon patients with rare-chronic diseases and disorders. This bill would provide the people of Nebraska with this necessary protection that will help ensure they receive the medically appropriate care they need.

Plasma protein therapies provide an increased quality of life for patients with rare, chronic life-threatening diseases and disorders. Reimbursement proposals that hinder patient access can lead to delays in obtaining the proper medical care, ultimately resulting in higher healthcare costs. This bill seeks to protect patient access to medically appropriate therapies, therefore PPTA supports your efforts.

New York passed a similar law last year (Chapter 2010-536, Laws of New York). This new law enacted in 2010, prohibits health plans from imposing cost-sharing, deductibles, or co-insurance obligations greater than those for any non-preferred brand drugs or their equivalents. It will protect patients from cost sharing policies that make their life-saving therapies cost prohibitive.

I appreciate your time in this matter and look forward to receiving any questions or comments you may have on this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Bill Speir
Director, State Affairs

cc:

- Senator Rich Pahls
- Senator Mark Christensen
- Senator Mike Gloor
- Senator Chris Langemeier
- Senator Beau McCoy
- Senator Dave Pankonin
- Senator Pete Pirsch
- Senator Dennis Utter