The Iowa Continuity of Care Coalition strongly supports legislation ensuring prescription stability by restricting non-medical switching practices. The coalition includes patient and provider organizations that support policies to protect patient access to medicine that physicians prescribe. This legislation is not only essential for an individual to manage their disease, but it also reinforces the significance of the physician-patient relationship.

Non-medical switching occurs when patients are stable on a therapy, and the health plan makes insurance coverage changes that forces patients off their current therapies for reasons other than the patient’s medical needs – typically saving money for the health plan. Patients with chronic and complex diseases are most affected by non-medical switching because they rely upon a stable medication regimen to go about their day-to-day lives. When patients lose or interrupt access to the therapy that stabilizes their condition, they may also lose the ability to manage their disease, facing re-emerging symptoms and new side effects; patients may even face hospitalization or emergency room visits as a result of non-medical switching. Non-medical switching impacts patient care and increases overall health care costs.

Health plans may price patients out of their chosen medication by:

- Assigning the medication a higher co-pay
- Increasing patients’ out-of-pocket requirements
- Reducing the maximum plan coverage amount for prescription medications
- Eliminating coverage for certain medications

The coalition supports legislation that helps patients stay on their medication by requiring health plans to maintain coverage for patients whose medication continues to be prescribed by their physician for an ongoing condition and has been covered for that patient during the current plan year or a previous year. A patient has the option to work with his or her physician and change a medication regimen as needed. Non-medical switching legislation does not lock patients into their current treatment path; it simply protects the path from being derailed.

Continuity of care legislation protects access to medications that patient’s need to manage chronic and complex conditions. In a survey of Iowans, one-third of the respondents have personally been affected by non-medical switching or have a personal relationship with someone that has.

The coalition appreciates your support in ensuring continuity of care for patient treatments that are determined by their physician with the best interest of the individual.