



# NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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## Supporting the Patient-Physician Relationship

When a new legislative session begins, a flurry of legislative proposals begin to circulate. Legislators, including myself, begin the process of introducing new proposals or re-introducing proposals from the last or previous legislative sessions. There are a variety of reasons for re-circulating a proposal that was not signed into law, ranging from a bill not getting a hearing in its assigned committee the previous session, to bringing back a proposal with slight modifications that a legislator hopes may be more palatable to their respective body, to maybe quite simply, a proposal passing out of the State Assembly but not being put to a vote in the State Senate (or vice versa).

Usually, when a legislator first releases their bill, the first step in the process of trying to move it forward to becoming a law is obtaining co-sponsors for their bill. Involvement in co-authoring or co-sponsoring proposals varies by proposal and issue, but essentially, co-sponsoring another legislator's bill is an endorsement of support for the bill. The number of sponsors of a piece of legislation and sometimes who sponsors particular legislation can help aid (or hinder) a particular proposal moving forward.

I've co-sponsored a proposal recently that I want to tell you about. The legislation is related to step-therapy in our state and it was authored by Representative John Nygren (Marinette) and Senator Alberta Darling (River Hills). I would guess that if you haven't had experience with step-therapy protocols, someone you know probably has. Step therapy is a process by which an insurance company may require a patient to try a particular treatment or series of treatments decided by the insurer before a patient can have access to the drug or treatment originally prescribed by their physician.

Under step therapy, a patient is not able to try an alternative treatment until the first one is proven to fail. Insurance companies utilize the practice to try to control costs while maintaining high-quality care. Pitfalls of this process to patients include a patient's medical history many times being removed from the process and other medical conditions not being considered, which might interfere with a prescribed drug's effect. In short, there is a detrimental challenge presented that interferes with the patient-physician relationship.

Representative Nygren and Senator Darling's legislation provides transparency to what is many times a confusing process for patients and physicians. It enhances the patient-physician relationship and will expedite necessary care to patients throughout the state. Twenty-one states in the nation have some variation of this legislation enacted into law.



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This is an issue that hits close to home for me and a piece of legislation that I hope, with the help of my co-sponsorship/support, will pass both houses of the Legislature and have the opportunity to be signed into law by the Governor.

*Nancy VanderMeer represents the 70<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin State Assembly District, which includes portions of Monroe, Jackson, Portage and Wood counties.*