

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Advocates thank lawmakers for action on prior authorization and step therapy reform

State senate leaders vote yes on SB 225

HARRISBURG, Pa.— Patients and advocates across Pennsylvania are thanking state senators this week for passing Senate Bill 225, a vital piece of legislation that aims to curb restrictive prior authorization and step therapy (fail first) practices imposed by health insurers.

A practice that started as a method to control costs for experimental or new procedures, prior authorization requires physicians to obtain approval from insurers before prescribing medication or moving forward with a specific treatment. Today, the practice can lead to significant delays in care that contribute to negative outcomes. Step therapy, meanwhile, requires patients to try, and fail, on one or more prescription drug, test or treatment option chosen by their insurance company before approving the one recommended by their physician. This effectively gives an insurer more control than the prescribing provider.

“We applaud Members of the Senate for advancing this important piece of legislation and urge the House to do the same. Patients need the ability to quickly assess their condition with their medical professionals and find the best course of action for their individual health needs,” said Emma Watson, Director of Government Relations, for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. “No patient should face unnecessary barriers to receiving lifesaving medications. This legislation will streamline and safeguard patient access.”

According to a recent survey of physicians by the American Medical Association, the negative impact of processing prior authorization requests on patients is clear. **A staggering 78%** of patients report prior authorization delays can lead to them abandoning their treatment. **And 92%** of doctors report prior authorization delays can have a negative clinical impact on patients. “This bill brings long awaited transparency, timeliness, and consistency to the process of delivering quality health care to our patients, which is always the ultimate goal,” said David A. Talenti, MD, President of the Pennsylvania Medical Society.

SB 225, however, would create standards meant to reduce delays from prior authorization and make the process more efficient, as well as implement guidelines that make for a clearer route to exceptions from step therapy.

“SB 225 provides much needed transparency, accessibility and consistency to the processes of prior authorization and step therapy,” said Larry Jones, MD, FACP, President of the PA Chapter, American College of Physicians. “The changes included in SB 225 will reduce the administrative time our practices spend each week on prior authorization, significantly improving our ability to treat patients in a timely and medically appropriate manner.”

Prior authorization and step therapy are often applied to patients living with a wide range of diseases and chronic conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, arthritis, and multiple sclerosis. Not only do these practices impact patient outcomes, but they undermine the patient-provider relationship and delay access to needed treatment which may result in worsened symptoms and associated higher healthcare costs.

“Months of good faith negotiations have led us to this key moment in improving the prior authorization system for millions of patients and providers in Pennsylvania,” Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians President Jason Woloski, MD, explained. “We wholeheartedly thank Sen. Phillips-Hill, Senate leadership and all members of the Senate for their commitment to this issue.”

“At the PA Osteopathic Medical Association, our mission is to promote the distinctive philosophy and practice of osteopathic medicine in Pennsylvania, for our members and their patients,” said Lisa Witherite-Rieg, DO, President, PA Osteopathic Medical Association. “POMA expresses our gratitude to members of the Senate for putting patients first and recognizing that member physicians do the same when implementing a care plan.”

SB 225 is authored by state Senator Kristin Phillips-Hill (R, York) and has bipartisan co-sponsorship and support.

**HB/SB 225 is Supported By:
The Coalition to Improve Prior Authorization and Step Therapy for Pennsylvanians**

