

GROWTH AND WELLNESS PEDIATRICS, LLC  
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BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20814

February 23, 2020

Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
Maryland Senate Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East Wing  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Dear Senator Kelley and Members of the Committee:

As a board-certified pediatrician with experience treating dozens of patients with PANDAS and PANS, I write to express my enthusiastic support for HB447 / SB475 ("AN ACT concerning 2 Health Insurance – Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders – Coverage"). This bill currently under consideration in both the Senate and the House of Delegates would require some insurance plans, including Medicaid, to cover treatment of Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS) and Pediatric Acute-Onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS).

PANDAS/PANS is a disorder that can have a significant impact on the day to day functioning of affected children and their families. A variety of treatments have been shown to be helpful for these children including intravenous immunoglobulin therapy (IVIG). Unfortunately, the high expense of IVIG and lack of coverage by insurance companies can put this treatment out of reach for many children who would significantly benefit from it. Just as IVIG is covered for other autoimmune diseases, so too should medical insurers cover this treatment for those with PANDAS/PANS.

In my primary care pediatric practice, I am seeing children frequently with classic signs of PANDAS/PANS, including a sudden onset of obsessive compulsive disorder, restricted eating, emotional dysregulation and motor tics often following a strep infection. The recent medical literature on PANDAS supports these clinical observations. A recent study by Dr. Dritan Agalliu, of Columbia University, persuasively demonstrates how strep bacteria crosses the blood-brain barrier to create inflammation, following a pattern of other autoimmune diseases.

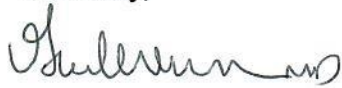
As PANDAS research evolves and awareness of the disease increases, more and more children and their families are seeking treatment. Unfortunately, these families are faced with financial

and logistical challenges in obtaining proper care in large part due to lack of coverage for key treatment options.

SB 475 and its companion bill, HB 447, is common-sense legislation that would remove barriers to important treatments for many children, whose health and ability to function may depend on access to covered care by a qualified provider. Please offer your support to this legislation on behalf of the Maryland children and families whose lives are upended by PANDAS and PANS.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gail Warner".

Gail Warner, M.D.