

February 20, 2024

Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support for HB 932 - Health Insurance - Utilization Review - Revisions

The Honorable Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of The ALS Association and the families we serve in Maryland, we urge you to support **HB 932 - Health Insurance - Utilization Review - Revisions**, which will reform the prior authorization process and have a positive impact on people living with ALS.

ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects the nerve cells responsible for controlling voluntary muscle movement. It is a devastating condition that leads to the gradual loss of muscle function, eventually rendering individuals unable to speak, eat, or breathe independently. Given the severity and rapid progression of ALS, timely access to necessary medical interventions, treatments, and support services is paramount.

Currently, the prior authorization process poses significant obstacles and delays for ALS patients, impeding their access to critical treatments and therapies. According to the AMA, 91% of physicians said that prior authorization requirements had a *somewhat or significant* negative impact on patients' clinical outcomes¹. In addition, the cumbersome nature of prior authorization requirements not only undermines the quality of care but also exacerbates the physical, emotional, and financial burdens faced by people living with ALS and their families.

Implementing reform in prior authorization practices would alleviate these burdens and enhance the quality of life for people living with ALS. The following are key benefits that reform would bring:

1. **Timely Access to Care:** Eliminate unnecessary delays in accessing treatments, therapies, medications, and assistive devices. Prompt initiation of these interventions is vital to slow disease progression and provide maximum relief and support to patients.
2. **Reduced Administrative Burden:** Reforming this process would allow healthcare professionals to focus on delivering timely and comprehensive care to people living with ALS.
3. **Enhanced Patient-Physician Relationship:** A strong patient-physician relationship is crucial in managing ALS effectively, ensuring that treatment decisions are made collaboratively and tailored to the specific needs of the individual.
4. **Improved Quality of Life:** Swift access to interventions such as mobility aids, speech therapy, nutritional support, and palliative care can significantly enhance the quality of life for people living with ALS.

¹ <https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/prior-authorization/why-prior-authorization-bad-patients-and-bad-business>

5. **Financial Relief:** Reforms in the prior authorization process would reduce out-of-pocket expenses, lessen the need for appeals, and provide financial relief to those grappling with mounting healthcare costs.

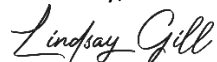
We also wanted to highlight this extremely important provision that has been a priority since last year's introduction. This provision prohibits an insurer or PBM from issuing an adverse decision on a reauthorization for the same prescription drug or request additional documentation from the prescriber for the reauthorization request if: **(i) the entity previously approved a prior authorization for the prescription drug for the insured; (ii) the insured has been treated with the prescription drug without interruption since the initial approval of the prior authorization; and (iii) the prescriber attests that, based on the prescriber's professional judgment, the prescription drug continues to be necessary to effectively treat the insured's condition (page 7, lines 11-22).** Patients are routinely harmed when insurers approve a prescription drug for a year and then take that drug away from the patient. This creates a never-ending cycle where the patient is subjected to repeated drug changes based on formulary and savings to the insurers without protection to the patient.

In conclusion, I implore the committee to support this bill and recognize the pressing need for prior authorization reform, particularly concerning the care of people living with ALS. By implementing more efficient and patient-centered processes, you can positively impact the lives of countless individuals living with this devastating disease. Please consider taking decisive action to improve the prior authorization system.

Thank you for your attention and anticipated support. I remain hopeful that together, we can make a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by ALS.

Should you require further information or wish to discuss this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at Lindsay.gill@als.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindsay Gill".

Lindsay Gill
Managing Director, Advocacy
ALS Association