



March 26, 2025

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health & Government Operations Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Bonnie Cullison
Vice Chair, Health & Government Operations Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 773 – Reform to Copay Accumulator Programs

To the Maryland Assembly Health and Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of the Alliance for Gout Awareness, I am writing in support of SB 773. This legislation is necessary to ensure that patients living with gout in Maryland can utilize copay assistance to access and afford the treatments they need to manage their condition without the risk of surprise out-of-pocket costs.

About Gout and The Alliance for Gout Awareness

Gout is a chronic form of inflammatory arthritis affecting more than 12 million Americans.¹ Gout occurs due to a buildup of uric acid in the body. When excess uric acid builds up in the body, it deposits around joints and can lead to swollen joints and sudden, intensely painful attacks that can be debilitating.² It is a chronic medical condition that, left untreated, can result in more frequent or painful attacks and joint damage.³ It can also increase patients' risk for other severe medical conditions such as kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and stroke.⁴

The [Alliance for Gout Awareness](#) (AGA) aims to reduce stigma and empower patients by improving public understanding of gout. AGA collaborates with our network of member organizations to heighten public awareness, address common misconceptions, and encourage patients to acknowledge the disease's impact and seek appropriate treatment.

Copay Accumulator Programs are a Significant Barrier to Gout Treatment

Insurers often use a variety of approaches to manage costs—often at the expense of gout patients' health. One tactic, known as a "copay accumulator program," allows patients to utilize copay cards, but prohibits these payments from counting toward patients' deductible, or annual out-of-pocket cost. This impacts treatment access and affordability by restricting the benefits that copay assistance can provide a patient. These programs can force patients to ration their medication or stop treatment altogether due to cost, which can exacerbate their condition. As newer, more innovative drugs can be more costly,

¹ [Trends in Prevalence of Gout Among US Asian Adults, 2011-2018 | Rheumatology | JAMA Network Open | JAMA Network](#)

² Alliance for Gout Awareness. What is Gout? <https://goutalliance.org/what-is-gout/>

³ Alliance for Gout Awareness. When Gout Goes Untreated. <https://goutalliance.org/resources/when-gout-goes-untreated/>

⁴ Arthritis Foundation Comorbid Conditions and Gout. <https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/about-arthritis/related-conditions/other-diseases/five-conditions-linked-with-gout>

it is important that patients can utilize copay assistance to afford treatments prescribed by their providers.⁵

While gout is not curable, it is treatable when approached from a holistic view of managing acute gout flares and addressing the root cause of chronic gout. Gout is a systemic disease that requires providers to utilize therapies to relieve flare symptoms and decrease the amount of uric acid in the blood. Continuous access to care is critical to ensure gout patients can successfully manage their disease.⁶ This emphasizes the need for patients to be protected against the surprise out-of-pocket costs associated with copay accumulator programs in order to limit the risk of poor health outcomes.

SB 773 Supports Treatment Accessibility and Affordability for Patients in Maryland

SB 773 protects patients against surprise out-of-pocket costs by ensuring that all payments, including those made with copay assistance, count towards patients' out-of-pocket maximums, thus supporting treatment accessibility and affordability. As a result, patients can proactively and effectively manage their condition.

On behalf of the Alliance for Gout Awareness and our membership, thank you for your leadership on this important issue and for supporting patient access. If we can provide further details or answer any questions, please reach out to Kayla Roddey at kroddey@allianceforpatientaccess.org.

Sincerely,

The Alliance for Gout Awareness & co-signing organizations:

Alliance for Patient Access
American Kidney Fund
Global Healthy Living Foundation
Gout Education Society
Gout Support Group of America
HealthyWomen
Infusion Access Foundation
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.
National Infusion Center Association
Rheumatology Nurses Society
U.S. Pain Foundation

⁵ Alliance for Gout Awareness. A Roadmap to Better Care for Gout. <https://goutalliance.org/resources/a-roadmap-to-better-care-for-gout/>

⁶ Alliance for Gout Awareness. The Journey Toward Disease Management: A National Survey of Gout Patients. <https://goutalliance.org/resources/the-journey-toward-disease-management-a-national-survey-of-gout-patients/>