



HB 578 – Maryland Medicaid Program – Prior Authorization For Drug Products to Treat and Opioid Use Disorder – Prohibition

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Date: February 14, 2022

POSITION: Support

The Maryland Coalition of Families: Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) helps families who care for someone with behavioral health needs. Using personal experience, our staff provide one-to-one peer support and navigation services to family members with a loved one with a mental health, substance use or gambling issue.

MCF strongly supports HB 578.

The bill is simple - it prohibits Medicaid from requiring prior authorization for prescription drugs that are used to treat an opioid use disorder. This prohibition already exists for private insurance carriers. Passage of the HB 578 is one step (of many) that must be taken by the state to address the tragedies of opioid addiction and opioid overdoses.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has severely negatively impacted Maryland's opioid overdose crisis. Data shows that fatal overdoses by opioids increased during the first and second quarters of 2020 by 12% over the same period in 2019, and this increase was sustained in the first two quarters of 2021. People who have a substance use disorder have been especially hard hit by the pandemic – isolation, the disruption of support systems, and the restrictions in access to treatment have all contributed to increases in substance use and relapse. And even before COVID-19, Maryland was in the midst of an opioid epidemic.

While recent increases in opioid overdose deaths is a national problem, Maryland ranked #7 in highest overdose death rates in the country between April 2020 and April 2021, with an estimated 2,876 overdose deaths. Black Marylanders have experienced substantial and disproportionate increases in fatal overdoses.

For this reason Maryland must enact strong measures to promote the treatment of opioid use disorders and reduce the number of opioid overdose deaths. HB 578 is one such measure.

Therefore we urge a favorable report on HB 578.

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