



**House Health & Government Operations Committee**

**February 8, 2022**

**House Bill 578**

**Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Prior Authorization for Drug Products to Treat an  
Opioid Use Disorder - Prohibition  
Support**

NCADD-Maryland strongly supports House Bill 578. In the fight against the opioid overdose crisis, this bill will prohibit Maryland Medicaid from imposing a prior authorization requirement on the three medications used in treating opioid use disorders. The intent of the bill is to bring equity to low income Marylanders who are enrolled in Medicaid, as Maryland enacted this policy in the commercial insurance market in 2017.

This bill applies to medication for opioid use dependence. This does not apply to opioids used to treat pain.

Removing prior authorizations will allow people to receive medication deemed to be medically necessary by licensed health care practitioners. Currently, Medicaid has all medications in this class on its formulary, and has open access on its preferred drug list (PDL) for the brand named products. When a medication is on the PDL, there is no prior authorization. Decisions about what medications are on or off the PDL take place annually.

In 2016, Medicaid's Pharmaceuticals and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee took one of the buprenorphine products off the PDL for reasons that were non-clinical. Treatment providers were faced with a decision to switch the medications their patients were taking, or take on the extra steps and time involved with requesting authorization. This caused unnecessary anxiety among patients and there were instances where the change in medication led to relapse for some.

The General Assembly saw fit in 2017 to pass legislation prohibiting prior authorizations for these medications in commercial insurance. This was done with agreement from both the treatment providers and the carriers themselves as they realized the importance of ensuring people have immediate access to these medications. Medicaid's current policy in practice supports this approach and passing this bill will ensure the policy stays in place.

We urge your support of House Bill 578.

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