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# ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATISM ASSOCIATES, P.C.

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**SUBJECT:** House Bill 650 - Health Insurance - Reimbursement and Use of Specific Pharmacies and Dispensaries - Prohibitions  
**COMMITTEE:** House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chairwoman  
**DATE:** Thursday, March 2, 2023  
**POSITION:** FAVORABLE

**Arthritis and Rheumatism Associates, P.C.** is dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of persons with disorders of the joints, muscles, tendons, and other connective tissue. Our practice integrates excellent medical care with comprehensive services. We maintain a full-service laboratory, x-ray facilities, a physical therapy division, seven centers for the diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis and seven infusion centers.

House Bill 650 as introduced specifies that certain entities are not precluded from recommending, rather than requiring, a specialty drug be obtained through a certain pharmacy or dispensary; providing that certain entities may not prohibit a subscriber, member, or beneficiary from choosing to obtain a certain specialty drug from a pharmacy or dispensary that meets certain requirements.

Specifically, the bill is aimed to ensure patient access to prescription drugs through the physician dispenser or pharmacy of their choice. This is critical to continuity and efficient care and treatment. Maryland licensed physicians are allowed to personally dispense prescription drugs. A physician may dispense Medicare-covered prescription or nonprescription drugs where he or she is authorized by the State to dispense such drugs as part of his or her physician's license.

Commercial payers have implemented policies that prevent and or limit physician dispensing of drugs to their patients. Commercial payers are limiting access to their networks and pharmacy networks in particular to the detriment of a physician's ability to dispense prescriptions to their patients.

It is of the highest urgency during this time of economic uncertainty and public health emergency that payers avoid policies that prevent patients from accessing needed prescription drugs dispensed directly from their physician.

House Bill 650 will strengthen current anti-steering laws by repealing existing exceptions for specialty and mail order drugs as well adding provisions that emphasize the importance of patient choice. It will enable patients with complex or chronic conditions like cancer, arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis, and more to obtain their medication from the pharmacy of their choice in a timely manner. Patients should be able to choose the most convenient location to receive their medication, whether that's a local independent pharmacy near their home or from their physician's office.

House Bill 650 will increase treatment plan adherence, reduce potential waste, and minimize delays-improving overall clinical outcomes. For these reasons we ask for a favorable report.

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