
ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATISM ASSOCIATES, P.C.

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 526 - Health Insurance - Pharmacy Benefits Managers - Specialty Drugs Dispensed by a Physician
COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Pam Beidle, Chair
DATE: Wednesday, February 14, 2024
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.

Senate Bill 526 *“prohibits a pharmacy benefits manager (PBM) that provides pharmacy benefits management services on behalf of a carrier from requiring a beneficiary to use a specific pharmacy or entity for certain specialty drugs. This prohibition applies if the drug is (1) dispensed by a physician; (2) used in the treatment of a chronic, complex, rare, or life-threatening medical condition; and (3) injected or infused (or an oral drug that meets specified conditions). For a specialty drug that fulfills these requirements (including one dispensed by mail order), a PBM that provides pharmacy benefits management services on behalf of a carrier may not reimburse a pharmacy or pharmacist in an amount less than what the PBM reimburses itself or an affiliate for the same specialty drug.”*

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, and specialty drugs in particular to their patients. These limitations of a physician’s ability to dispense prescriptions to their patients, is a detriment to patient care.

Senate Bill 526 will strengthen patient care by 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.

Senate Bill 526 will increase treatment plan adherence, reduce potential waste, and minimize delays-improving overall clinical outcomes. For these reasons we ask for a favorable report.

For More Information Contact: Barbara Brocato and Dan Shattuck
At 410-269-1503, barbara@bmbassoc.com