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TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Steve Johnson

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
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DATE: February 28, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1423 – *Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance – Step Therapy, Fail-First Protocols, and Prior Authorization – Prescription Drugs to Treat Serious Mental Illness*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society and the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 1423.

This bill is narrowly drafted to prohibit both the Medicaid program and the fully insured commercial market from applying a prior authorization requirement or step therapy protocol for a prescription drug used to treat an enrollee’s diagnosis of: (1) bipolar disorder; (2) schizophrenia; (3) major depression; 4) post-traumatic stress disorder; or (5) a medication-induced movement disorder associated with the treatment of a serious mental illness.

Maryland has made great strides to ensure that step therapy protocols do not unnecessarily burden or limit a patient’s access to medications. However, it still must be noted that policies which restrict access to medication can cause negative outcomes. This is especially true for individuals with serious mental illness where patients may be on more than one drug to address both the illness and reactions to the medications. When patients experience delays in treatment or when access is restricted, the risk of emergency department visits, hospitalizations, or even criminal justice involvement increases, which can lead to additional medical and societal costs.

Therefore, on behalf of the above-referenced organizations and our patients, we urge a favorable vote on House Bill 1423.