



**To:** Senate Finance Committee

**Bill:** Senate Bill 974 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Nonopioid Drugs for the Treatment of Pain

**Date:** February 26, 2025

**Position:** Favorable

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The Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants (MdAPA) supports *Senate Bill 974 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Nonopioid Drugs for the Treatment of Pain*. The bill would require Maryland Medicaid and private insurance to provide coverage for nonopioid drugs used for the treatment of pain to the same extent as an opioid or narcotic drug. Insurance companies cannot require prior authorization, step therapy protocol, or fail-first protocol for the non-opioid drug.

In January 2025, the Food and Drug Administration approved Journavx, a first-in-class non-opioid analgesic.<sup>i</sup> MdAPA strongly supports ensuring this medication is covered by insurance, given the risks associated with the use of opioid for pain management. In 2022, there were 2,573 deaths from opioid overdoses in Maryland.<sup>ii</sup>

We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-novel-non-opioid-treatment-moderate-severe-acute-pain>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/drug\\_poisoning\\_mortality/drug\\_poisoning.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/drug_poisoning_mortality/drug_poisoning.htm)