



Statement of the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the Senate Finance Committee

Chair: Senator Pamala Beidle

January 27, 2025

SB0111: Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Step Therapy, Fail-First Protocols, and Prior Authorization - Prescription to Treat Serious Mental Illness

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association, go on record in support of SB0111: Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Step Therapy, Fail-First Protocols, and Prior Authorization - Prescription to Treat Serious Mental Illness.

SB0111: Seeks to prohibit Medicaid and Maryland-regulated health plans from implementing fail-first or step-therapy protocols for prescription drugs used to treat specific mental health disorders outlined in the bill, including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depression, PTSD, and medication-induced movement disorders related to the treatment of serious mental illnesses.

While step-therapy protocols can pose risks for all patients, they are particularly harmful to those undergoing treatment for mental health disorders due to the highly individualized nature of these conditions and the varying responses patients may have to treatment. Many mental health conditions are chronic and lifelong, with symptoms that can differ significantly even among individuals with the same diagnosis. As such, step-therapy protocols restrict healthcare providers' ability to prescribe the most appropriate medication in the correct dosage and at the right time.

Even brief disruptions in medication, particularly for patients who have found a treatment regimen that stabilizes their condition, can have serious, life-altering consequences. SB0111 aims to protect vulnerable individuals from unnecessary treatment delays and ensure they receive care without additional barriers.

*On behalf of the Maryland Rural Health Association,
Jonathan Dayton, DrPH(c), MS, NREMT, CNE, Executive Director*