



TESTIMONY FOR SB0111

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

Bill Sponsor: Senator Lam

Committee: Finance

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0111 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our members are very well aware that health insurers are not in the business to help people with medical problems. They are in the business of making money. We also know that we pay more and get less for medical care than any country in the world because of this.

One of the more recent ways that health insurers have devised to deny care in order to make more money is to require step therapies or prior authorizations, or fail-first protocols before they will pay for prescription drugs. These obstacles are designed to ensure that, for expensive medications, the patient must wait as long as possible in order to receive any real relief.

This bill, if enacted, would halt this process for people with serious mental illness. The bill specifically precludes health insurers from requiring step therapies, fail-first protocols, or prior authorizations for prescriptions for people with the following mental illnesses –

- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Major depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- A medicine-induced movement disorder associated with the treatment of a serious mental illness

This is a great first step in trying to ensure that people in this state get the care they need. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

