



December 27, 2024

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

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Nurse Practitioner Association of Maryland (NPAM), representing over 850 nurse practitioners throughout the state, we offer our support on this legislation.

As an association representing nurse practitioners who are at the forefront of patient care, we believe that this bill is crucial for ensuring timely access to appropriate medication for individuals grappling with serious mental health conditions. By eliminating unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, this legislation empowers healthcare providers to make decisions based on *clinical judgment* and the *individual needs of their patients*.

Several members of our association work as psychiatric nurse practitioners and have encountered situations that this bill would have helped. To name a few:

- A pregnant patient diagnosed with bipolar disorder--the only safe pregnancy mood stabilizer drug was declined without prior authorization.
- A patient diagnosed with bipolar disorder failed multiple trials of mood stabilizers. Stable on one drug for over a month and kept getting declined. Took multiple appeals to Maryland Medicaid to get approved.
- A patient diagnosed with bipolar disorder who had a drug overdose was stabilized on a drug. Insurance declined the drug and wanted provider to switch him to another. The provider had to write multiple letters to get approved.

- Patient with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder discharged on one drug but required a PA or step therapy and was recommended for a cheaper medication. (Medicaid)
- Patient was prescribed one drug, but insurer was denied with recommendation to fail on one of two other drugs first until provider completed a peer-to-peer call.
- Patient prescribed one drug, but insurer denied saying that they would not agree because the patient was over 18. Provider started that medication because the patient was using substances and provider did not want her on a controlled medication. The insurer recommended a controlled substance.

It is our firm belief that timely access to appropriate medication is paramount in managing mental health conditions effectively.

Sincerely,

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