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Written Testimony

House Bill 382 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Step Therapy, Fail-First Protocols, and Prior Authorization - Prescription to Treat Serious Mental Illness

Health and Government Operations Committee – January 30, 2025
Support

Background: House Bill 382 would prohibit the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, health maintenance organizations, and managed care organizations from applying a prior authorization requirement, step therapy protocol, or fail-first protocol for prescription drugs used to treat certain mental illnesses of certain insureds and enrollees.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and all of its agencies. This includes Jewish Community Services (JCS), which offers programs and services for people of all ages and backgrounds, helping them achieve their goals, enhance their wellbeing, and maximize their independence. JCS currently provides therapy and medication management to a large population of clients with both commercial and public insurance.

“Step therapy or fail-first protocol” means a protocol established by a carrier that requires a prescription drug or sequence of prescription drugs to be used by an insured or enrollee before a prescription drug ordered by a prescriber is covered. Step therapy protocols can require patients to try less effective medications before more effective ones. Fail-first protocols and prior authorization requirements can delay treatment and increase stress and frustration for patients. Inappropriate use of step therapy protocols can lead to adverse reactions and delay necessary treatment. This can increase health care costs, especially for patients with rare diseases.

This bill would ensure that a prior authorization requirement, fail-first protocol, or step therapy protocol may not be imposed for a prescription drug used to treat a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or a medication-induced movement disorder associated with the treatment of a serious mental illness, protecting these individuals from prolonging their course of treatment with potential negative effects.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Jewish Councils asks for a favorable report on HB382.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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