

2/27/2026

I, Alfred Beads, Jr., am testifying as a citizen in my individual capacity.

Alfred Beads, Jr. spoke to us in support of Senate Bill 798 and agreed to have his name and words shared here today. He has Medicaid. He said he was lucky to not have trouble getting his tobacco treatment medications covered, but emphasized that patients with Medicaid should be free to try a variety of medications in pursuit of the one that works best for them. His experience is a great example of why coverage should not be limited to one or two of the FDA-approved medications for tobacco treatment – what works for one person might not work for the next.

“I was very fortunate when I got Chantix since the other medications (nicotine replacement therapy) hadn’t been as effective for me. When those meds didn’t work, I felt discouraged. They weren’t taking the cravings away. I would have loved to be able to go cold turkey but I couldn’t. Chantix almost immediately started to have an impact. It’s a tiny pill but it took away the desire and cravings and my whole mindset changed. Cigarettes didn’t even taste the same because Chantix took away the enjoyment of the cigarette. I have not smoked in over two years and now I can be around people who smoke. I have no temptation to smoke – I just don’t think like that anymore. I would recommend Chantix to anyone who is serious about stopping smoking. My appetite increased, my food tastes better, and my health is a lot better now. I have gained a little weight but I’d much rather that than lung cancer. Chantix should be given to people trying to stop smoking unless the other meds work better for them.

I have friends and neighbors who did not get the medications covered and I feel very lucky that I did. Two days before I was supposed to have neck surgery due to spinal compression in February of this year, my insurance said they wouldn't cover it. I don't see how the insurance company could make a call like that when they don't even know me. My doctor has known me for years. The insurance company is outside the room. I feel like I'm just a name or a number on a piece of paper. What's the point of my doctor making a recommendation if insurance isn't going to cover it? Is it motivated by money? The patient’s best interest should always be our priority.

I’d hoped to get my surgery several years ago but I didn’t have anyone to help me during recovery. Now I have a significant other who I met a year ago. She doesn’t smoke – she really dislikes smoking! Now I am ready for my surgery and I have the support I need to

succeed. My doctor has appealed the insurance company's decision and I pray that my surgery will be covered."