



ON OUR OWN
OF MARYLAND

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

HB 808: Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Step Therapy, Fail-First Protocols, and Prior Authorization - Prescription to Treat Serious Mental Illness

Thank you Chair Bagnell, Vice-Chair Cullison, and committee members for your commitment to improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare services for Marylanders, especially community members who experience significant behavioral health challenges. On Our Own of Maryland (OOOMD) is a nonprofit behavioral health education and advocacy organization, operating for 30+ years by and for people with lived experience of mental health and substance use recovery.

OOOMD is in support of HB 808, which would remove Medicaid's prior authorization requirements, fail-first or step-therapy protocol for prescription drugs used for treatment of certain serious mental illnesses and medication-induced movement disorders. Individuals living with complex mental health needs already experience significant barriers in accessing mental health supports, treatment, and recovery services in their communities. **This bill could improve care by prioritizing consumer choice, protecting patient-doctor decision-making, and prompting timely access to desired treatment.**

Many individuals living with serious mental health challenges have experienced a gauntlet of programs, treatments, and prescriptions before finding the combination that works for their unique body, mind, and situation. All medications incur risks of adverse side effects and reactions, which can vary greatly from person to person due to individual physiology and concurrent health conditions. The determination of what course(s) of treatment best balances risk and reward should always be led by the individual consumer in consultation with their healthcare provider team.

A 2023 Kaiser Family Foundation¹ survey found 26% of adults who sought treatment for a mental health condition experienced prior authorization problems. When cost-saving protocols undermine consumers' expressed needs and lived expertise, or countermand the thoughtful recommendations of our medical providers, it can result in delayed care, out-of-pocket costs, and declines in health.

We encourage a favorable report. Thank you.

¹ Pestaina, K., Lupes, L., Wallace, R., & Lo, J. (2023, October 12). *Consumer problems with prior authorization: Evidence from KFF survey*. KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation). <https://www.kff.org/affordable-care-act/issue-brief/consumer-problems-with-prior-authorization-evidence-from-kff-survey/>