

## **Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1461**

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I also want to begin by apologizing that I cannot be there in person. I am currently in Guatemala participating in a physical therapy service trip, providing care to individuals who otherwise have little to no access to rehabilitation services.

My name is Kayla Gray-Hillian, and I am a physical therapist in Maryland. I am also a patient who has lived with rheumatoid arthritis for the past ten years.

For the past decade, accessing the medication that allows me to function has been an ongoing struggle. Time and time again, I have faced delays through the specialty pharmacy system—delays because prescriptions were held for weeks, delays due to weather-related shipping issues, and unexplained pauses in processing my medication. What should be a routine process has instead become a constant nightmare.

When my medication is delayed, my disease does not pause. My joints swell, my hands stiffen, and the pain becomes overwhelming. As a physical therapist, my hands are essential to my work. When they hurt, I cannot perform at the level my patients deserve. I push through the pain because my patients rely on me, but no healthcare provider should have to choose between their own health and the care they provide to others.

Over the past year alone, I have had to change medications three different times. Each time, I waited more than a month just to receive approval to order the medication, followed by another several more weeks or more before it finally arrived—if it arrived at all without complications. During those weeks, I am left waiting, calling the pharmacy, wondering why my medication has been paused or delayed again.

Living with a chronic disease is already difficult. Patients should not also have to fight the very system that is supposed to provide their treatment.

What makes this even harder is the constant uncertainty. I never know if my medication will be delayed again because of weather, administrative barriers, or unsafe delivery practices where my medications have been left on the street and are vulnerable to being lost or stolen. These medications are not optional—they are essential to our ability to live, work, and care for others.

I share my story not only as a patient, but as a healthcare provider who understands how vital consistent treatment is. When patients cannot reliably access their medication, their health suffers, their ability to work suffers, and their quality of life suffers.

This system must improve. Patients living with chronic illnesses deserve reliable, timely access to the medications that keep them functioning. No one should have to fight this

hard just to stay healthy.

I urge you to consider meaningful changes that prioritize patients and ensure that people with chronic diseases can depend on the treatments they need.

Thank you for your time, and for listening to the experiences of patients like myself and so many others.