
ARTHRITIS AND RHEUMATISM ASSOCIATES, P.C.

SUBJECT: House Bill 1461 - Health Insurance - Coverage for Specialty Drugs - Rheumatologic Conditions
COMMITTEE: House Health Committee
The Honorable Heather Bagnall, Chair
DATE: Friday, March 13, 2026
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Arthritis and Rheumatism Associates, P.C. is dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of persons with disorders of the joints, muscles, tendons, and other connective tissue. Our practice integrates excellent medical care with comprehensive services including dispensing specialty drugs. We maintain a full-service laboratory, x-ray facilities, a physical therapy division, seven centers for the diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis and seven infusion centers.

House Bill 1461 *“Altering the circumstances under which certain insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations are prohibited from excluding coverage for certain specialty drugs for the treatment of rheumatologic conditions.”*

Specifically, the bill is aimed to ensure patient access to prescription specialty medical drugs for the treatment of rheumatologic conditions through the physician dispenser or pharmacy of their choice. This is an important measure to take to provide for continuity and efficient care and treatment. Maryland licensed physicians are allowed to personally dispense prescription drugs. A physician may dispense Medicare-covered prescription or nonprescription drugs where he or she is authorized by the State to dispense such drugs as part of his or her physician’s license.

Commercial payers have implemented policies that prevent and or limit physician dispensing of drugs, and specialty drugs in particular to their patients. These limitations of a physician’s ability to dispense prescriptions to their patients is a detriment to patient care.

House Bill 1461 will strengthen patient care by adding provisions that emphasize the importance of patient choice. We have been advocating for broader expansion and ideally elimination of the anti-steering exclusion for specialty drugs. Despite efforts over many years, the insurers remain resolute in their opposition to allowing patient choice of pharmacy or dispenser when it is medically necessary and a life preserving component of their ongoing treatment.

House Bill 1461 will increase treatment plan adherence, reduce potential waste, and minimize delays-improving overall clinical outcomes.

For these reasons we ask for a favorable report on House Bill 1461.

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