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May 2, 2024

Chair Joshua Miller  
Senate Committee on HHS  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Vice Chair Bridget Valverde  
Senate Committee on HHS  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairs Miller and Valverde,

The American Academy of Neurology (AAN), is the world's largest association of neurologists and neuroscience professionals, with over 40,000 members. The AAN's mission is to enhance member career fulfillment and promote brain health for all. A neurologist is a doctor with specialized training in diagnosing, treating, and managing disorders of the brain and nervous system such as Alzheimer's disease, stroke, concussion, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, headache and migraine.

The AAN writes to express our support for RI S.B. 2611, An Act Relating to Insurance – Benefit Determination And Utilization Review Act (Limits the use by insurers of step therapy, a protocol that establishes a specific sequence in which prescription drugs for a specified medical condition are covered by an insurer, by allowing medical providers to request step therapy exceptions). This legislation would prevent unnecessary delays in care by allowing exceptions to step therapy determinations, a form of prior authorization (PA) and thereby ensure patients receive needed medication. **The AAN strongly urges the Rhode Island Senate Committee on Health and Human Services to pass S.B. 2611.**

Utilization management tools such as PA and step therapy can be time consuming and expensive administrative requirements that take away from direct patient care and be dangerous for patients. These tools not only cost an estimated \$93.3 billion annually on the US healthcare system,<sup>1</sup> but has also been reported to lead to patient treatment abandonment by 80 percent of physicians, with 33 percent reporting that PA has led to a serious adverse event (such as hospitalizations, permanent impairment, disability, or even death) for a patient in their care.<sup>2</sup> For neurologic patients with chronic conditions, there is often no "one size fits all" course of treatment. Prompt access to care is essential to minimize risks of dangerous complications and side effects.

Prior Authorization also creates high level of burden on the medical care system, with 88 percent of physicians describe the burden associated with PA as high or extremely high, averaging 45 prior authorizations a week, taking around 15 hours a week to process. The gap between demand for and supply of neurologic services is widening due to several factors, including an aging population increasingly afflicted with neurodegenerative disorders.<sup>3</sup> Use of physician time to complete PA

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/abs/10.1377/hlthaff.2021.00036>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/prior-authorization-survey.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.neurologylive.com/view/the-grave-threat-posed-by-the-shortage-of-neurologists>

processes reduces patients' abilities to receive timely care. The AAN is very concerned by the expansion of PA throughout the health care system and supports efforts to protect the physician-patient decision-making process.

S.B. 2611 is a multifaceted approach that will improve access to and continuity of care for patients, promote transparency and fairness in the prior authorization process, and improve timely access to care and administrative efficiencies. These advancements will benefit many neurologic patients who require prompt medical decision making for their chronic conditions.

On behalf of the AAN, our 40,000 members, and their patients, we urge a favorable vote on S.B. 2611. Please don't hesitate to contact Grant Niver, Senior State Affairs Program Manager, at [gniver@aan.com](mailto:gniver@aan.com) with any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carlayne Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carlayne E. Jackson, MD, FAAN  
President, American Academy of Neurology