



Arlene Gorelick, MPH
Board Chair

Marianne Huff, LMSW
President & CEO

November 3, 2021

The Honorable Bronna Kahle
Chair, House Health Policy Committee
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933

RE: Senate Bill 412

Dear Chair Kahle and Members of the Health Policy:

The Mental Health Association in Michigan is the state's oldest advocacy organization representing the interests of adults and children with mental health conditions in matters of public policy. On behalf of the Mental Health Association in Michigan and the thousands of Michiganders who experience mental health conditions and addictions, thank you for hearing testimony on Senate Bill 412 which would, among other things, improve access to psychotropic medications for individuals with Medicaid by permanently eliminating prior authorization requirements and step therapy.

We are pleased to be appearing before this committee to urge you to support SB 412 which will ensure that access to appropriate medications is preserved and protected for vulnerable Michigan citizens living with mental health conditions, epilepsy, HIV-AIDS, cancer and organ replacement therapy.

We are asking for the following changes to the current bill language to maintain these protections:

1. A drafting error replaced the definition of "prior authorization" that has been used since 2004 in the Social Welfare Act (PA 248 of 2004) and in budget boilerplate Section 1875 with a definition from another bill, SB 247, that amends the Insurance Code. A technical amendment is necessary to restore the definition currently found in the Social Welfare Act:

(f) "Prior authorization" means a process implemented by the department of community health that conditions, delays, or denies the delivery of particular pharmaceutical services to medicaid beneficiaries upon application of predetermined criteria by the department or the department's agent for those pharmaceutical services covered by the department on a fee-for-service basis or pursuant to a contract for those services. The process may require a prescriber to verify with the department or the department's agent that the proposed medical use of a prescription drug being prescribed for a patient meets the predetermined criteria for a prescription drug that is otherwise covered under this act or require a prescriber to obtain authorization from the department or the department's agent before prescribing or dispensing a prescription drug that is not included on a preferred drug list or that is subject to special access or reimbursement restrictions.

2. SB 412 is intended to consolidate Medicaid patient protections in law and to reduce confusion. Unfortunately, a new subsection was added that will increase confusion. Because of this language, the Open Access Coalition recommends striking the following (lines 10-14, page 3):

(3) This section does not prohibit the department from contracting with a managed care organization for pharmaceutical services offered under the medical assistance program administered under this act as long as the contract complies with the provisions of this section.

Mailing Address:
MHAM
PO BOX 11118
Lansing, MI 48901

State Office:
MHAM
1100 W. Saginaw Ste. 1-1B
Lansing, MI 48915

Phone: (517) 898-3907
Fax (517) 913-5941
email: mhamich@aol.com
Web: www.mha-mi.com

Mental Health Association in Michigan

Testimony SB 412

November 3, 2021

The ability to successfully access medications that ameliorate uncontrolled symptoms of mental illness is critical for individuals with mental health conditions. Mental health treatment must be tailored to the needs of the individual and there are many factors that influence the efficacy of a psychotropic medication in individuals. Often, persons may need to try a few different medications before one is found that effectively alleviate symptoms of a mental health condition. A medication that may work well for one person may have little to no impact on the symptoms of another person.

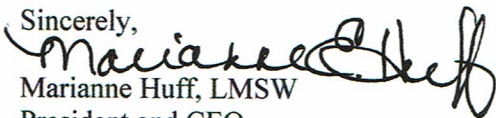
Older medications such as antipsychotics have significant side effects that can interfere with the person's ability to adhere to treatment. Newer antipsychotics have significantly lower adverse side effects increasing the likelihood that the individual will participate collaboratively in treatment. Additionally, some of the older antipsychotic medications have been proven to cause Type II Diabetes and other chronic health conditions. A person with a mental health condition should not have to choose between the possibility of significant health-related consequences resulting from psychiatric medications and psychiatric stability.

The importance of finding a drug that works for the person and that has lesser side effects cannot be overstated. It is when individuals do not experience positive results or experience adverse side effects that they are likely to stop taking medications that may mean poorer health outcomes and increasing avoidable hospitalizations and other unnecessary medical care. (National Council on Behavioral Health/MHA). These are just a few of the ways in which individuals with mental health conditions are negatively impacted when denied access to the "right" medications. Additionally, the average daily cost for an inpatient psychiatric stay is approximately \$900.00 per day. If an individual can obtain the right medications, then the likelihood of inpatient treatment is significantly reduced.

Failed treatment often results in uncontrolled symptoms that interfere with educational and job performance, continued employment, housing arrangements, and family relationships, and may result in hospitalization, or criminal justice involvement. Public policies that make it more difficult to access psychiatric medications are particularly dangerous for people in crisis, increasing the likelihood that affected individuals will have poorer outcomes in all areas of life: social; environmental; physical and psychological. MHAM believes that it is vital for the legislature to ensure that medications that are currently protected to continue to be protected from step therapy and prior authorization.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony presented to you today. MHAM believes this to be a serious matter of public policy for Michigan citizens with mental health-related concerns. If you have any questions, please reach out to me at mhuffmham@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marianne Huff".

Marianne Huff, LMSW
President and CEO