

VIRTUAL PRESS CONFERENCE

This press conference will occur virtually: Tuesday, February 9 at 10 a.m. EST

Link for Conference: <https://my.demio.com/ref/3TyL3DnHT9rSM0Fm>

Patient advocates speak out against restrictive health insurance processes

Rep. Steven Mentzer, Sen. Phillips-Hill and advocates urge lawmakers to HB/SB 225 forward

HARRISBURG, Pa., February 5, 2020 – On February 9, State Rep. Steven Mentzer (R, Lancaster) and Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill (R, York) along with patient advocates from across Pennsylvania will host a virtual press conference to encourage legislators to prioritize HB 225 and SB 225. If passed, this legislation would curb restrictive prior authorization and step therapy (fail first) practices imposed by health insurers.

A practice that started as a method to control costs for experimental or new procedures, prior authorization requires physicians to obtain approval from insurers before prescribing medication or moving forward with a specific treatment. Step therapy requires patients to try, and fail, on one or more prescription drug, test, or treatment option chosen by their insurance company before gaining access to the drug, test, or treatment option that was recommended by their physician.

Prior authorization and step therapy are often applied to patients living with a wide range of diseases and chronic conditions, like, cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, arthritis, and multiple sclerosis.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, many states and insurers have temporarily lifted these restrictions in an effort to provide greater access to care. However, patient advocates are warning the issue goes much deeper than our present environment.

“Prior authorization and step therapy, also known as fail first, can undermine a physician’s ability to effectively treat patients and can lower the quality of care,” said Emma Watson, Pennsylvania government relations director for American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. “Patients need the ability to quickly assess their condition with their medical professionals and find the best course of action for their individual health needs.”

According to a recent survey of physicians by the American Medical Association, the negative impact of processing prior authorization requests on patients is clear. **A staggering 78%** of patients report prior authorization delays can lead to them abandoning their treatment. **And 92%** of doctors report prior authorization delays can have a negative clinical impact on patients.

Event Speakers:

Patient and provider advocates will share their individual stories with prior authorization and step therapy.

- Emma Watson, ACS CAN PA Government Relations Director
- Rep. Steve Mentzer, Republican, Serving Lancaster County, Sponsor of HB 225
- Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill, Republican, Serving York County, Sponsor of SB 225

- Tracey Conti, MD, Program Director of Family Medicine at UPMC McKeesport and President of the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians.
- Karen Jury is a multiple sclerosis and cancer patient who serves as a patient volunteer with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in Pennsylvania.
- Michael DellaVecchia, MD, PhD, FACS President of the Pennsylvania Medical Society
- Samantha Rynearson is a patient advocate with the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation.
- Suzette Song, MD, Orthopedist and Vice President of Medical Affairs at OSS Health in York.

Event supported by:

The Coalition to Improve Prior Authorization and Step Therapy for Pennsylvanians

