

MaineHealth

MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community
Health Network
LincolnHealth
MaineHealth Care At Home
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Memorial Hospital
Maine Medical Center
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
NorDx
Pen Bay Medical Center
Southern Maine Health Care
Synernet
Waldo County General Hospital
Western Maine Health

Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable
Care Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth In Support of

LD 1268, “An Act to Provide Greater Access to Treatment for Serious Mental Illness by Prohibiting an Insurance Carrier from Requiring Prior Authorization or Step Therapy Protocol” Wednesday, April 14, 2021

Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services, I am Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth, and I am here to testify in support of LD 1268, “An Act to Provide Greater Access to Treatment for Serious Mental Illness by Prohibiting an Insurance Carrier from Requiring Prior Authorization or Step Therapy Protocol.”

MaineHealth is Maine’s largest integrated non-profit health care system that provides the full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. As part of our mission of “Working Together So Maine’s Communities are the Healthiest in America,” MaineHealth, which includes Maine Behavioral Healthcare (MBH), is committed to creating a seamless system of behavioral healthcare across Maine, coordinating hospital psychiatric care with community-based treatment services, and better access to behavioral healthcare through integration with primary care services.

Prior authorizations (PA) and step therapy place a significant and expensive burden on practices, and have a real impact on the patients we are trying to care for by delaying treatment and access to clinically appropriate and evidence-based medicine. The legislation before you today will help a particularly vulnerable patient population – those with serious and persistent mental illness.

Our clients with mental health diagnoses already face incredible challenges, including accessing care. Many behavioral health providers, including MBH, maintain long wait lists due to a shortage of providers and inadequate reimbursement. In fact, the waiting list for outpatient psychiatry at MBH is over 6 months long with 425 clients waiting for care. Once a client accesses care, finding a successful medication regimen is based largely on trial and error. Providers and patients shouldn’t be required to jump through administrative hoops as they look for the right medication plan to treat the illness. Furthermore, the pandemic has created greater strains on the behavioral health system and clients’ ability to access timely care – our clients shouldn’t be forced to “fail first” in order to receive the appropriate medication, which can often be lifesaving.

For those reasons, I urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1268. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.