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Testimony on House Bill 7587

An Act Relating to Human Services – Medical Assistance – Prescription Drugs

May 14, 2026

Dear Chairman Abney & Members of the House Committee on Finance:

The Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council would like to thank Representative Casey for sponsoring this bill.

As this topic has been before this Committee numerous times before, most of you are aware that step therapy policies require insured individuals to try and fail alternative treatments specified by a health plan, sometimes with adverse effects, before the health plan will cover the prescribed treatment as a cost containment strategy. When step therapy is used appropriately, it can steer patients towards less risky and lower cost treatments as first-line treatment options. Unfortunately, in some cases, step therapy policies are inconsistent with sound scientific and clinical evidence, requiring patients to try and fail the same treatment multiple times. In such instances, step therapy can interfere with the physician-patient relationship, cause extended delays in care, and severely impact the quality of life for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD), especially those being prescribed drugs to address frequent or severe seizure activity.

House Bill 7587 attempts to resolve these issues.

If enacted, House Bill 7587 would help to ensure individuals who are treated for behavioral health or epilepsy are able to obtain effective medications in a timely manner, provide continuity of care, as well as

avoid unnecessary hospitalizations, disruptions to their daily routines and extreme impacts on their quality of life.

As it has been successfully implemented in 24 other states, it is an attempt to balance the need for cost control with the impact on patients' lives. I have attached to this testimony documentation of other states efforts and success.

Thank you for your consideration.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at any time at 401.737.1238 or kevinnerney@riddc.org.



Kevin Nerney

Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council

Attachments: Open Access to Antipsychotics in State Medicaid Programs: Effect on Healthcare Resource Utilization and Costs Among Patients With Serious Mental Illness
Enacted Mental Health Open Access Laws
2020 MDHHS Psycotropic Workgroup Findings
JAMA - National and State Societal Costs of Schiz0phrenia in the US in 2024
RI Access to Critical Mental Health Treatments