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RE: Support for House Bill No. 7429 - Limiting Copay, Coinsurance, or office deductibles for services of a physical therapist

Dear House Members of the HHS Committee,

I am writing this letter in support of House Bill No. 7429, Co-pay parity for our physical therapists in the state of RI. I am a board-certified orthopedic surgeon and hold an advanced certificate of Added Qualification in Sports Medicine. I have been practicing medicine for over twenty years, serving active duty in the U.S. Navy as the Head of Orthopedics in Newport, RI, Head Team Physician for the Naval Academy Prep School, and team Physician for the United States Coast Guard Academy. I spent eight months caring for wounded warriors and Afghan civilians in 2009. I hold several local and national leadership positions and am the former Chief of Orthopedic Surgery at South County Hospital. I now serve as the President/CEO of Ortho Rhode Island, the largest orthopedic practice in the state where we proudly manage over 45% of the orthopedic and musculoskeletal care in our state. House Bill No. 7429 is a valuable piece of legislation, concerning a very important issue that currently limits access to quality health care for the people of Rhode Island.

As an orthopedic surgeon, I fully appreciate the value of physical therapy and the need for it to be more affordable for our patients. Health care is collaborative. As a physician, I recognize many of my patients can resolve their symptoms and return to their normal lifestyle simply by participating in physical therapy. Physicians understand that Physical Therapy is a safer, more effective treatment for musculoskeletal and neurological conditions than other interventions. However, when patients are referred to PT for pain control and improvement of functional mobility, only to return with complaints of the services being too expensive, it is extremely frustrating. Often patients end up asking for alternative measures that are more cost-effective to the patient but typically offer pain relief and don't really solve the problem. Limiting access to



physical therapy by making it less affordable inhibits the ability of the health care team to work collaboratively and ultimately risks higher long term health care costs.

The inequities of this system, which limit access to safe, timely, and effective care, result in one of three potential outcomes: First, the patient can simply suffer with pain and loss of function. Second, they can seek cheaper, but far more dangerous, options like opioids. Finally, they can mitigate by reducing attendance or shortening the treatment time, which increases their risk for future complications that require more invasive and expensive treatment intervention. None of these is an acceptable outcome for Rhode Islanders.

I implore you to support House Bill No. 7429 and promote Rhode Islanders having access to the safest, most effective treatments available for an affordable cost. Research has shown repeatedly that Physical Therapists are capable of providing those services and that PT significantly reduces downstream costs of repeated episodes, surgical interventions, and further injuries from falls or other trauma. Please give our citizens access to care that can help them return to work and care for themselves and their families. This bill will help Rhode Island accomplish that goal.

Regards,

Michael Bradley, MD, MBA, MS

President/CEO Ortho Rhode Island