

Testimony in Support of SB2385
An Act Relating To Human Services -- Medical Assistance -- Prescription Drugs

March 26, 2026

Chairwoman Murray, Vice Chairwoman Lauria, Secretary Urso, members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee: I am Zachary Gauthier, and I am here today as a concerned citizen who deeply cares about the well-being of every Rhode Islander. I am here to speak about Senate Bill 2385, which is critical for our community—a bill that will heal lives and safeguard our state's future.

This bill is about prioritizing patient health over insurance company profits. Right now, our current system allows managed care organizations to prioritize their bottom line by placing agonizing hurdles, like prior authorizations and step therapy, in the path of individuals needing essential medications—those critical anticonvulsant and antipsychotic drugs. Senate Bill 2385 prohibits the Rhode Island medical assistance program and the insurance companies it contracts with from requiring prior authorization or step therapy protocols for a prescription of a nonpreferred anticonvulsant or antipsychotic.

Can you imagine the fear, the desperation, of a patient or their family, knowing the right medication exists, but being forced to wait and "fail" on other drugs solely so an insurance company can protect its profit margins? For some, these delays are more than frustrating; they can lead to debilitating seizures, severe mental health crises, and, in some tragic cases, even cost a life. This is not just inefficient; it is a prioritization of corporate gain over human life.

This bill offers a lifeline. By removing these barriers, we empower our doctors to act immediately, prescribing the medication that works right from the start, instead of letting insurance companies dictate medical decisions. This will reduce immense suffering, cut down on emergency room visits, and prevent devastating crises. Think of the peace of mind this brings to families and the profound human impact of getting someone the care they need when they need it most. By preventing these costly emergencies, we are being fiscally responsible, saving our state vital resources that are currently being drained by the fallout of insurance-driven delays.

To ensure we proceed with the utmost care, I propose that we implement Senate Bill 2385 as a pilot project. This pilot project allows us to carefully monitor the effects of removing these barriers, gather critical data, and demonstrate the benefits to both patient outcomes and our state's financial health. This transparency will clearly show how providing timely, effective treatment leads to better health outcomes and a more financially sustainable medical assistance program for Rhode Island, stripping away the justification for these profit-driven roadblocks.

This is not just policy; it is a profound commitment to our community's health and dignity. It is smart, it is compassionate, and as a pilot project, it is a responsible path forward.

Thank you for your time, your attention, and your empathy in considering this vital legislation.

Zachery Gauthier
1247 Atwood Avenue
Johnston RI 02919
zag198705@gmail.com