

Daniel Macera, PT, DPT

Senior Regional Director – Pappas OPT Physical, Sports and Hand Therapy

In support of S 2561

Dear Chairwoman Murray and members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Dan Macera, and I am a physical therapist with 12 years of clinical experience currently serving as Senior Regional Director at Pappas OPT Physical and Hand Therapy.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed the significant challenges that prior authorization requirements create for patients seeking physical therapy. These administrative barriers frequently delay access to essential care, disrupt continuity of treatment, and ultimately result in poorer health outcomes for Rhode Islanders.

While I recognize the intent behind prior authorization—to curb overutilization and contain healthcare costs—the reality is that these policies often backfire. Instead of reducing overall expenses, they prolong the time before patients receive needed care, which can worsen conditions, extend the duration of therapy, contribute to a poorer prognosis and lead to increased reliance on additional healthcare services.

One of the most common reasons patients visit outpatient physical therapists is for lower back pain—a condition I treat frequently. Research consistently demonstrates that early intervention with physical therapy for acute lower back pain not only improves outcomes but also reduces total healthcare spending. The sooner patients begin therapy, the faster they recover, and the less likely they are to require further costly interventions.

All too often, however, I see patients with acute lower back injuries waiting one to two weeks for authorization before they can be evaluated. Instead of resolving their symptoms within three to four weeks and returning to work and daily activities, these patients may endure three or more months of therapy, multiple physician visits, X-Rays, MRIs, and specialist referrals—costly and unnecessary steps that could have been avoided with prompt access to physical therapy.

Last year, our Rhode Island outpatient practice evaluated approximately 20,000 new patients. Due to the recent increase in insurers requiring prior authorization, about 8,000 of those patients experienced delays in starting their care. That's 8,000 Rhode Islanders who

had to wait to return to their normal activities, their jobs, and full participation in their communities.

I strongly support S2561, which takes a big step in removing these barriers and allowing patients to access physical therapy services in a timely manner. Passing this bill would not only improve patient outcomes but also reduce the burden on our healthcare system and enhance the well-being of individuals and families across Rhode Island.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. I would be happy to provide additional examples or answer any questions about how this legislation would benefit patients in our state.

Respectfully,

Dr. Daniel Macera, PT, DPT

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