



**COLUMBIA**  
Pain Management, P.C.

1010 Tenth St

Hood River OR 97031

Phone (541)-386-9500 Fax (541)-386-9540

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

Utilization management practices, such as prior authorization (PA) and step therapy (ST) are important tools to contain costs and ensure quality of care. However, they can often result in delayed treatment, abandonment of treatment and higher administrative burdens. PA is a process that requires physician offices to ask permission from a patient's insurance company before performing certain medical procedures or prescribing certain medications. ST protocols require patients to try and fail certain therapies before qualifying for others.

In the field of pain management and addiction medicine, PA and ST tools can result in prolonged suffering and even life-threatening consequences. Onerous "fail-first" algorithms often require that patients have a trial of therapy for a medication with known harms (tolerance, addiction, constipation, or cognitive side-effects) before a safer option is allowed for or paid.

Senate Bill 139 seeks to ensure that utilization management protocols are fair, transparent, evidence-based, and best support the health needs of the patient. The key concerns addressed by SB 139 are to prevent treatment delays and treatment abandonment.

Primarily, this bill improves the efficiency of this process to support better patient outcomes, by:

- Allowing patients to maintain prescription drug coverage for 12 months. By removing the requirement to seek PA again and again for the same drug, there will be less disruption in the treatment process for the patient. In some cases, disruptions can result in significant loss of health or even life.
- Allowing patients to continue with treatments that have already been approved, for a reasonable and customary length of time not less than 90 days. Again, the PA process in this case can interrupt the treatment and result in loss of progress towards health.
- Continuing to require reimbursement for a prescription drug that is benefiting the patient, even if it is removed from the formulary after the end of an enrollment period.
- Creating a clear, accessible and convenient process for the prescribing practitioner to request a step therapy exception, and allowing a patients ST history to follow them. This would spare patients the requirement of repeating step therapy or utilizing a step therapy that there is documented evidence will be harmful to a particular patient.

Thank you for your support of SB 139.

David P. Russo, DO, MPH, MS

Board Certified, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation; Sub-specialty Pain Medicine