



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Physician Coalition Applauds Energy and Commerce Committee
for Calling for Prior Authorization Reform**

WASHINGTON, DC—The Regulatory Relief Coalition (RRC) — a group of national physician specialty organizations advocating for reduced regulatory burdens that interfere with patient care — enthusiastically applauds the House Energy and Commerce Committee for examining the Improving Seniors’ Timely Access to Care Act (Seniors Act) in its committee hearing today.

The Seniors Act seeks to modernize and streamline prior authorization (PA) in the Medicare Advantage (MA) program on behalf of the more than 28 million seniors enrolled in MA plans and the physicians who care for them. The bipartisan legislation – supported by an overwhelming majority (44) of members of the Energy and Commerce Committee – would reduce barriers to care, decrease provider burden, and help ensure Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in MA plans have the same access to Medicare-covered items and services as beneficiaries who opt for traditional Medicare.

The RRC greatly appreciates Subcommittee on Health Chairman Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Ranking Member Anna Eshoo (D-CA) as well as full Committee Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ) for their efforts to ensure that MA policies are not a barrier to timely and equitable access to care for the patients our members serve. The RRC also applauds the leadership and tenacity of Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health Vice-Chair and Seniors Act champion, Rep. Larry Bucshon, MD (R-IN) for advancing this critical legislation for Medicare seniors.

The RRC’s efforts were critical in spurring CMS to advance proposed rules in December 2022 that mirror the Seniors Act, which finished the 117th Congress after passing the House with 380 combined co-sponsors — [53](#) senators and [327](#) representatives. In June of this year, a majority of the House and Senate – 233 Representatives and 61 Senators – signed [letters](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) urging the Administration to finalize its proposed [electronic PA rule](#). In July 2023, the House Ways and Means Committee advanced legislation out of committee that included provisions of the [Seniors Act](#).

We are especially appreciative of the following remarks made by witnesses and committee members at today’s hearing...

- Dr. Steven Furr, MD, FAAFP, President-Elect, American Academy of Family Physicians (RRC member organization), noted the inordinate amount of time he and his staff spend addressing

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prior authorization and encouraged the committee to reduce regulatory administrative burden by passing the Seniors Act for patients and physicians who serve them.

- Subcommittee Chair Guthrie (R-KY) said that the hearing was focused on two aims – “providing greater access to care for seniors, including lower cost prescription drugs, as well as reducing unnecessary red tape for health care providers.” Subcommittee Ranking Member, Eshoo (D-CA) said that Medicare Advantage is “overusing prior authorization” which has “morphed into a costly, inefficient mechanism.”
- Rep. Kim Schrier, MD (D-WA), said, “Prior authorization has been a real barrier for seniors” and noted that bipartisan Seniors Act would “would reform this process.” She emphasized that CMS issued a proposed rule “with many similar reforms” to the Seniors Act and called for CMS to “get those rules implemented so that we can take care of our seniors as quickly as possible.”
- Rep. Carter (R-GA) and Rep. Harshberger (R-TN), both community pharmacists, said that regulatory burdens of prior approvals force pharmacies to have staff solely dedicated to managing prior approvals.

George A. Williams, MD, senior secretary for Advocacy of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, said, “We are very pleased that the Energy and Commerce Committee is seeking to advance the Seniors Act to address the drastic increase in Medicare Advantage plans’ overuse of prior authorization.” He added, “Reform is desperately needed to provide relief to patients and physicians from delays and denials for medical necessary care and we strongly urge CMS and Congress to seize on this momentum to advance commonsense prior authorization reforms through regulation and law.”

Russell R. Lonser, MD, FAANS, chair of the department of neurosurgery at The Ohio State University and chair of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons/Congress of Neurological Surgeons Washington Committee, added, “We applaud the committee for recognizing that the rampant overuse of prior authorization continues to cause inappropriate delays and denials of medical treatments for our seniors.” He noted, “America’s neurosurgeons urge CMS to release final rules to streamline prior authorization and for Congress to get this legislation across the finish line this year because patients can ill afford to wait any longer to hold Medicare Advantage plans accountable.”

Along with the RRC, more than [500](#) organizations representing patients, health care providers, the medical technology and biopharmaceutical industry, health plans, and others endorsed the legislation. The coalition looks forward to working with the Energy and Commerce Committee and our prior authorization champions to protect patients from unnecessary delays in care by enacting these prior authorization reforms into law and swift finalization of CMS’ rules related to prior authorization reform in Medicare Advantage.

More information about the RRC and the legislation is available at www.regrelief.org.

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