



June 21, 2024

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of more than 400 member hospitals and health systems, the California Hospital Association (CHA) supports the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act and urges your support as well.

With bipartisan support, the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act (S.4532, Marshall, R-KS; Brown, D-OH/H.R. 8702, Kelly, R-PA; Bera, D-CA) would enhance patient care by removing unreasonable Medicare Advantage (MA) plan requirements that needlessly delay or deny patients' access to care. Timely access is essential to the delivery of effective medical and rehabilitative care. When access is delayed, patient outcomes are compromised and medical conditions worsen, often leading to increased hospital readmission and the need for long-term support. Unfortunately, timely access to care is frequently hampered by the prior authorization processes established by many insurers.

This legislation would streamline electronic prior authorization in the MA program to improve patient access to appropriate Medicare services. The Act would also address the need for greater MA plan accountability by increasing transparency and reporting requirements.

The events of recent years underscore the need for sensible prior authorization reform. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many hospitals have struggled to maintain adequate capacity, often delaying admissions because beds are occupied by patients awaiting prior authorization for the post-hospital services they need.

Many Medicare beneficiaries live on modest incomes and have multiple chronic conditions that limit their activities. Our members report that many MA plans are using prior authorization in broad ways that create hurdles for vulnerable patients and lead to treatment delays that may endanger patients' health. While prior authorization can prevent unnecessary care and promote evidence-based practices, it should not be used to delay or deny necessary care.

About 3.4 million Californians are enrolled in an MA plan, representing 50% of state Medicare enrollment and 11% of national MA enrollment. Moreover, California's ongoing implementation of California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal will encourage the state's 1.4 million dually-eligible beneficiaries to enroll in dual special needs plans. The enrollment of our most vulnerable citizens — older adults and disabled individuals with limited incomes — adds urgency to implementing effective patient protections.

CHA is pleased to support this legislation and asks that you co-sponsor S.4532/H.R. 8702. If you have questions, please contact me at [aurourke@calhospital.org](mailto:aurourke@calhospital.org).

Thank you for your support of California's hospitals and the patients they serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne O'Rourke".

Anne O'Rourke

Senior Vice President, Federal Relations