



April 4, 2023

The Honorable Jim Wood
Chairman, Assembly Health Committee
1020 N Street, 390 LOB
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1437 (Irwin) Medi-Cal: serious mental illness – Support

Dear Chairman Wood,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write to you in support of AB 1437, which would improve access to crucial serious mental illness (SMI) medications for Medi-Cal patients by removing unnecessary prescription reauthorization barriers.

According to the DHCS Research and Analytic Studies Division, “Mental illness of any kind had a treatment prevalence of 59% and serious mental illness (SMI) had a treatment prevalence of 45%.” As various health studies have highlighted this is largely due to access problems among patients who need antipsychotic drugs and it is a consequence of not removing reauthorization requirements. To make matters worse, a study of 10 state Medicaid programs comparing drug access problems among psychiatric patients found patients who experienced treatment access problems were 360% more likely to experience a negative outcome including emergency room visits, hospitalizations, homelessness, suicidal ideation, or incarceration. In California, the study found that 57.9% of patients with a psychiatric diagnosis experienced an access problem leading to a negative outcome. Also, the study found that the treatment adherence among individuals experiencing homelessness refill non-adherence rate was 47.1% for psychiatric medications. Non-adherence rates for individuals experiencing homelessness were higher with drugs used in schizophrenia, with around 70% of individuals unable to follow their regimen.

To prevent negative outcomes and provide greater support to individuals experiencing SMI, the state must revise the existing process Medi-Cal patients navigate to obtain their SMI medications. Therefore, AB 1437 proposes making the following changes: prevent prior authorization from being required for any drug prescribed for the treatment of a SMI for a person 18 years of age and over who is not under the transition jurisdiction of the juvenile court, and automatically approve a prescribed drug for the treatment of SMI if there is a record of a paid claim that documents a diagnosis of a SMI within 365 days before the date of that prescription for a person 18 years of age and older who is not under the transition jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

For these reasons, CSAP is pleased to support AB 1437.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yoder', is placed below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Paul Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Members, Assembly Health Committee
Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin