



To: House Health & Human Services Committee  
From: Karen Malcolm, Protect Our Healthcare Coalition, [ProtectRIHealth@gmail.com](mailto:ProtectRIHealth@gmail.com)  
Date: April 23, 2025  
Re: **SUPPORT H5120** – Prior Authorization in Primary Care

The Protect Our Healthcare Coalition is a group of leading Rhode Island non-profits and consumer groups with a shared mission to protect, improve, and expand equitable access to quality, person-centered, affordable health care for all.

The Coalition **supports House Bill 5120** to reform prior authorization requirements in primary care. We believe reform is essential to help address administrative burden and burnout for our beleaguered primary care practitioners while also helping improve timely access to primary care ordered treatments and services for patients.

There is significant data to support the need for reform, including reviews and recommendations from our own Office of Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC). In their December 2023 report titled '*Primary Care in Rhode Island: Current Status & Policy Recommendations*'<sup>1</sup>, OHIC notes:

'Primary care delivers outcomes that support the welfare of the public. These public interest outcomes are placed at risk by a deteriorating primary care workforce.' (pg. 3)

One of OHIC's key findings in the report included:

'Clinician burnout is a key concern facing the primary care workforce and is driving physicians and advanced practitioners to reduce or leave clinical practice. Burnout among clinicians also negatively affects patient care. Utilization review activities, notably prior authorizations, and the challenges of managing a patient panel under workforce constraints that range from doctors to front office staff, exacerbate burnout.' (pg. 4)

In a follow-up report issued in June 2024 titled '*Prior Authorization Final Report of Recommendations*'<sup>2</sup> based on discussion in the Administrative Simplification Task Force, OHIC noted, 'Prior authorization holds some utility for promoting the efficient use of health care resources. However, there is an emerging consensus that process improvements and removal of prior authorization from some services are warranted.' In February 2025, OHIC finalized new regulations that mandate commercial health insurers to increase funding for primary care and begin reducing administrative burdens due to prior authorization policies.<sup>3</sup> While this is an important step forward, more needs to be done.

As a 2024 AMA survey of practitioners found "prior authorizations, while intended to control costs, often **negatively impact patient health outcomes** by causing delays in care, leading to patients abandoning treatment, and that 1 in 3 doctors reported prior authorizations lead to adverse health events."<sup>4</sup>

Prioritizing patient health outcomes drives the need to strengthen the new OHIC regulations for more impactful change for both our primary care professionals and Rhode Island patients.

We urge your support. Thank you.

**Protect Our Healthcare Coalition partners include:** Economic Progress Institute, RIPIN, Mental Health Association RI, RI Health Center Association, Latino Policy Institute, Central Providence Opportunities: A Health Equity Zone (CPO-HEZ), United Way of Rhode Island, Senior Agenda Coalition RI, RI Medical Society, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, SEIU Rhode Island Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Leukemia/Lymphoma Society, RI Coalition for the Homeless, Rhode Island Working Families Party, Mental Health Recovery Coalition, RI Community Food Bank, RI Psychological Association, Substance Use & Mental Health Leadership Council, Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, HousingWorks RI, Rhode Island Organizing Project (RIOP), National Association of Social Workers RI Chapter, The Womxn Project, Advocates for Better Care

<sup>1</sup> <https://ohic.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur736/files/2023-12/Primary%20Care%20in%20Rhode%20Island%20-%20Current%20Status%20and%20Policy%20Recommendations%20December%202023.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ohic.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur736/files/2024-06/OHIC%20Administrative%20Simplification%20Task%20Force%20Report%20June%2028%202024.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ohic.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur736/files/2025-03/230-RICR-20-30-4%20effective%203-20-2-2025.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/prior-authorization-survey.pdf>