

April 23, 2025

Rhode Island State House
House Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Support of H-5120, Primary Care Prior Authorizations

Dear Chair Donovan and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

RIPIN thanks the House Committee on Health and Human Services for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of H-5120, which would address the burden of prior authorization in primary care.

Primary care is in crisis in Rhode Island. As Rhode Island's health insurance consumer assistance program, we routinely encounter Rhode Islanders who face challenges in accessing routine primary care, or are simply unable to find a provider with availability without unreasonably long wait lists. And both consumers and providers have highlighted the prior authorization process as a central obstacle to access to care – for consumers, because prior authorizations can delay or prevent access to needed care, and for providers, because prior authorizations represent a significant administrative hurdle that takes up a growing portion of a provider's day and provides a further disincentive to working as a primary care provider.

RIPIN thanks the General Assembly, the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC), and the administration broadly for identifying barriers to consumer access to primary care as a priority. OHIC has recently published final rules which require a reduction in the volume of prior authorizations conducted by insurers. RIPIN strongly supported that process and the outcome, which requires 1) a 20% reduction in prior authorization volume, and 2) a prioritization of reducing prior authorizations filed by primary care providers. In testimony supporting a reduction in prior authorization volume in late 2024, RIPIN encouraged that reductions in prior authorization be particularly targeted to areas where the value proposition of prior authorizations (i.e. to reduce unnecessary or medically contraindicated care) was particularly low, and where the patient experience of care was particularly difficult, such as primary care and behavioral health care.

While OHIC incorporated into its final rule a requirement that health insurers prioritize procedures ordered by primary care providers, that requirement does not require a specific measurable reduction of primary care prior authorization. RIPIN encourages the general assembly to build upon the framework articulated by OHIC in its final rule by establishing measurable reductions of primary care prior authorization with the specific intent of improving consumer access to care in these priority areas. H-5120 represents a pathway forward to an improved access regime that decreases unnecessary provider burdens and makes it easier for Rhode Islanders to get the care they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. RIPIN urges the House Committee on Health and Human Services to approve this important legislation and protect and improve access to behavioral health for Rhode Islanders. RIPIN is a statewide nonprofit





founded in 1991 by a group of parents of children with special healthcare needs. While RIPIN's roots are in serving children and families with special needs, RIPIN now serves all Rhode Islanders who might benefit from education, advocacy, and peer-to-peer support in navigating healthcare and education systems. RIPIN operates Rhode Island's health insurance consumer assistance program, RIREACH, which helped several thousand Rhode Islanders save more than \$8 million in health care costs since 2018.

Sincerely,

/s/

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