

Hospital Association of Rhode Island Supports Legislation to Protect Patient Access to Care, Prevent Discriminatory Practices and Protect the Most Vulnerable

Providence, R.I. – The Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI) is advocating in support of critical legislation aimed at safeguarding patient choice and equitable access to healthcare at the General Assembly. House bills H [7365](#) and H [7879](#) would ensure that patients have the freedom to choose their healthcare providers and access essential medications without barriers. Both bills were heard in the House Committee on Health and Human Services on Tuesday. Companion bill S [2086](#) successfully passed the Senate on March 7th and S [2725](#) was heard this week.

House bill 7365 addresses “white bagging,” a practice used by insurance companies and Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs). Under this scheme patients are required to obtain vital prescriptions solely from pharmacies picked by, and affiliated with, insurance companies.

“White bagging denies patient choice and imposes significant, unnecessary burdens on both patients and providers,” said HARI President Teresa Paiva Weed. “These policies force providers, like hospitals and doctors' offices, to use medications shipped to their office from an outside specialty pharmacy, eliminating the providers' ability to control the preparation of drugs and administer them on-site to patients on the same day.”

“The practice of ‘white bagging’ undermines the integrity of patient care delivery and can lead to dangerous delays in vital care,” added Paiva Weed. “The implications of ‘white bagging’ are particularly harmful in the treatment of cancer, autoimmune diseases, and arthritis.”

Testimony at a recent hearing from Hopkinton resident Kathleen Tokarski underscores the urgent need for legislative action against white bagging. Tokarski’s daughter, who suffers from juvenile arthritis, recently went months without medication after her PBM refused to increase the frequency of her medication. Forced to receive infusions in Connecticut she missed 16 days of school and was issued a truancy violation.

“Prohibiting this practice would ensure that patients have access to the medications they require without avoidable and unnecessary delays or disruptions in treatment,” said Paiva Weed.

House bill 7879 prohibits any manufacturer, health insurer, or PBM from discriminating against a 340B entity participating in a drug discount program. The 340B program is an instrumental program that helps healthcare providers give essential services, such as access to behavioral health, telehealth and free discounted drugs, to Rhode Island’s most vulnerable populations. Restricting 340B pricing poses significant threats to the program’s integrity and undermines efforts to expand access to affordable medications.

“The 340B program is vital to ensuring our state’s communities in need receive essential drugs and services. Without it, patients could struggle to access medications and critical health services,” says HARI Senior Vice President Lisa Tomasso.

“The effects of these harmful practices extend beyond patient care to directly impact healthcare providers and institutions. HARI and its members strongly believe patients and their providers should oversee healthcare decisions,” says HARI President Teresa Paiva Weed.

“We thank Representatives Caldwell and Brien and Senators Ujifusa and Valverde for their leadership on these issues and look forward to working with the General Assembly towards passage this legislative session,” she added.

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About the Hospital Association of Rhode Island:

Founded over a half a century ago, the Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI) is a statewide trade organization that assists member hospitals in effectively meeting the health care needs of Rhode Island through advocacy, representation, education and services.