

27 Patient Advocacy Organizations (Names Below), H5438 – FOR

Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chairman, House Corporations Committee
RI State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Written Testimony for HR 5438, An ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE – PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFITS

Dear Chairman Solomon,

We, the undersigned, want to express our support for H5438, a much-needed bill that will protect patient access to co-pay assistance programs many Rhode Islanders depend on to cover significant portions of prescription medicine co-pays. We thank you for co-sponsoring the legislation and scheduling today's hearing on this measure as this gives the patient advocacy community the opportunity to express how vitally important this measure is to many Rhode Islanders.

We are also grateful to Majority Leader Blazewski and Representatives Vella-Wilkinson, Kazarian, Shanley, Tobon and Williams for their co-sponsorship.

The need for co-pay assistance for prescription medicine is especially critical for Rhode Islanders whose high deductible health insurance plans require them to spend thousands of dollars before their insurance kicks in. For many, this high cost sharing requirement makes it impossible for them to afford medications needed to treat a range of chronic and sometimes rare diseases without the co-pay assistance offered by a number of pharmaceutical manufacturers and other organizations.

Regrettably, health insurers have worked to block patient access to this much needed assistance. In 2018, legislation was introduced in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee that would have prevented co-pay assistance from counting towards a patient's deductible or co-pay requirements for medications. Many of us forcefully opposed this "copay accumulator adjustment" legislation and successfully enlisted the help of Senator Joshua Miller to change the measure to protect patient access to medicine.

In introducing H5438, you and your fellow co-sponsors have taken an important step in codifying the protections patients needed to maintain access to co-pay assistance programs. As our state continues to recover from the deadly impact of COVID-19, ensuring access to the medical care Rhode Islanders need has never been more important.

Many of us represent patients in the neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut. We are heartened that the legislatures in these states are also considering bills that will ensure similar patient access to co-pay assistance programs. We hope the Rhode Island legislature can take the lead on this issue in ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have access to life-sustaining medication.

Our thanks again for your support of H5438. Some of us who have signed this letter will also be testifying virtually today to provide more details on how critically important co-pay assistance programs are for individuals with different types of chronic diseases.

Sincerely,

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR SIGNATORS

ALS Association RI Chapter, Beth Flanagan
Alliance for Balanced Pain Management , Mike Walsh
American Cancer Society RI Cancer Action Network, Cori Chandler
American College of Rheumatology, Joseph Cantrell
American Diabetes Association, Stephen Habbe
Arthritis Foundation, Steven Schultz
Association for Clinical Oncology, Allison Rollins
Brain Injury Association Rhode Island, Debra Sharpe
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations, Brian Henderson
Connecticut Oncology Association, Dawn Holcombe
Derma Care Access Network , Mike Walsh
Epilepsy Foundation New England , Bill Murphy
Global Healthy Living Foundation, Corey Greenblatt
Hemophilia Federation of America, Miriam Goldstein
Infusion Access Foundation (IAF) , Kindyl Boyer
Mental Health Association of Rhode Island (MHARI) , Laurie-Marie Pisciotta
Multiple Sclerosis Association of America, Rebecca King
NAMI Rhode Island, Beth Lamarre
National Eczema Association , Michele Guadalupe
National Infusion Center Association (NICA), Kindyl Boyer
National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Jennifer Muthig
New England Hemophilia Association, Rich Pezzillo
New England Bleeding Disorders Advocacy Coalition, Joe Zamboni
Rheumatology Nurses Society, Amy Phillips
Susan G. Komen, Steven Raga
The AIDS Institute, Stephanie Hengst
U.S. Pain Foundation, Cindy Steinberg