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Contact: Lucila Garcia

lucilagarcia@rational360.com

Californians For Improved Patient Access Applauds Assembly Member Arambula for Introducing a Bill to Ensure More Open Access to Treatments for Vulnerable Patients

Assembly Bill 347 Reforms Protocols That Use Cost Containment Structures to Delay Care for Those Living with Chronic Conditions

Sacramento, CA (January 29, 2021) – Californians For Improved Patient Access, a coalition of more than 65 patient and provider groups and led by the Arthritis Foundation, the California Rheumatology Alliance, and the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation, today applaud Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula (Fresno) for introducing [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 347](#), which would reform utilization management insurance practices which can hinder access to treatments for patients with chronic conditions. The bill is introduced at a critical time when thousands of Californians living with chronic conditions are more susceptible to the novel coronavirus and are in need of utilization management reform.

Utilization management tools are used by health insurers and can require patients to try several alternative medications, before they are allowed access to the medication first deemed appropriate from their prescribing physician.

"AB 347 ensures that utilization management protocols are used properly to ensure that insurance protocols, such as step therapy and prior authorization, do not become barriers to care," said Steven Schultz, State Director, Advocacy & Access for the Arthritis Foundation. "This important bill will add transparency and standardization to utilization management protocols which will lessen the burden on health care providers and ensure patients get on the right medication in a timely manner."

AB 347 adds exceptions to step therapy protocols in certain critical situations, while still allowing insurers to use step therapy when it is appropriate for a patient's health. In addition, AB 347 ensures that a clinical peer group makes the utilization management decision on behalf of health plans. This important bill also requires reporting to appropriate departments concerning usage of utilization management protocols.

"Assembly Bill 347 is critical to the well-being of Californians living with rheumatic diseases, which can be quite debilitating and even lead to death," said Samy Metyas, MD, a rheumatologist at the Covina Arthritis Clinic and President of the California Rheumatology Alliance. "The need for patients to have access to prompt, affordable, and medically necessary treatments is ongoing and should be considered at every step of the policy making process."

These protocols often apply to patients living with life-threatening or debilitating conditions such as arthritis, crohn's disease, colitis, cancer, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, and more. By helping patients get

access to what their physician prescribes when it is medically necessary, AB 347 would help avoid unnecessary hospital visits and irreversible physical deterioration.

“Patients shouldn’t be forced to try medications that won’t work, or their doctor doesn’t recommend,” said Jake Johnson, State Advocacy Manager, Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation. “Providing relief for all people living with chronic diseases who are affected by step therapy protocols is the solution to help patients get the medications they need when they need them.”

Californians for Improved Patient Access groups include: ACS CAN California, AIM at Melanoma, Arthritis Foundation, California Rheumatology Alliance, Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation, Albie Aware, Allergy and Asthma Network, Alliance for Patient Access, Alzheimer’s San Diego, American Association of Clinical Urologists, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Rheumatology, American Urology Association, Association of Northern California Oncologists, Bay Area Women’s Health Advisory Council, Breathe California, California Association of Area Agencies on Aging, California Chronic Care Coalition, California Hepatitis C Task Force, California Pharmacists Association, California Urological Association, Carrie’s Touch, Chronic Disease Coalition, Congress of California Seniors, Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations, Emphysema Foundation of America, Familia Unida, Healthy African American Families, Hemophilia Council of California, International Cancer Advocacy Network, International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis, Latino Diabetes Association, LGBTQ Center Orange County, Looms for Lupus, Lupus & Allied Diseases Association, Lupus Foundation of America, Medical Oncology Association of Southern California, Mended Hearts, The Myositis Association, National Eczema Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Hemophilia Foundation, National Infusion Center Association, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, National Patient Advocate Foundation, National Organization for Rare Diseases, National Psoriasis Foundation, Neuropathy Action Foundation, Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of California, Shanti Project, Sickle Cell Disease Foundation, Spondylitis Association of America, Susan G. Komen, and The Wall Las Memorias.

About the Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation is the Champion of Yes. Leading the fight for the arthritis community, the Foundation helps conquer everyday battles through life-changing information and resources, access to optimal care, advancements in science and community connections. The Arthritis Foundation’s goal is to chart a winning course, guiding families in developing personalized plans for living a full life – and making each day another stride towards a cure. The Foundation also publishes Arthritis Today, the award-winning magazine that reaches 4.2 million readers.

About the California Rheumatology Alliance

The California Rheumatology Alliance (CRA) is a specialty physician association comprised of rheumatologists from community practices and medical centers throughout the state with a mission to advocate for patient access to rheumatology care. Rheumatologists are experts in the diagnosis, management and treatment of more than 100 different types of arthritis and rheumatic diseases.

About the Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation

The Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation is the leading non-profit organization focused on both research and patient support for inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD). The Foundation’s mission is to cure Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, and to improve the quality of life for the estimated 3 million Americans living with IBD. For over 50 years, the Foundation has been inspiring and engaging patients and caregivers in the country’s largest IBD community, and helping to dramatically accelerate the pace of research by breaking down traditional barriers to patients, data, funding, and collaborations. The Foundation also provides extensive educational resources for patients and their families, medical professionals, and the public. For more information, visit www.crohnscolitisfoundation.org, call 888-694-8872, or email info@crohnscolitisfoundation.org.

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