

Hi, My name is Michelle Zagardo and I am writing from Bethel to urge the committee to pass this bill. I am the mom of two amazing kids — a one year old and a three year old. I am a school social worker, a skier, and a mountain biker, among many other things.

I live with type 1 narcolepsy with cataplexy - a chronic neurological condition characterized in part by lower than normal levels of a neurotransmitter called hypocretin that regulates the sleep wake cycle.

In order to keep my symptoms at bay, so that I can be a dependable wife, mother, and social worker, I rely on medication that I have to take twice every night — at 10pm and 2am — in order to manage my narcolepsy and cataplexy.

Private insurance companies require frequent prior authorizations for this medication despite it being prescribed for a chronic, incurable, neurological illness. I spend hours each year advocating for the consistent coverage of this drug, and every year or two I have to go without the medication due to extended prior authorization processes.

Similarly, my neurologist and his staff spend significant time managing the PA process each time it comes up which diverts resources away from actual care.

As I write this, I am waiting to hear back from my private insurance company about whether my prescription will be covered. My last prior authorization was approved 9 months ago in July of 2024, but the insurance company informed me that it expired in January of 2025. It is now April and my prior authorization has been rejected continuously. I am awaiting a final appeal decision some time in the next 72 hours.

The approval of this bill would take the undue burden off of patients in Maine so that we can receive medically necessary treatment.

Thank you for your consideration in this critical health care matter.