

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and honorable committee members, my name is Joe Kubetz. I live in the fair city of Portland, and I am here to speak in support of LD 1496, to address when changes in insurance coverage and prior authorization requirements get in the way of access to medications and care.

I have benefited from prescription medication at certain times in my own life. Having prescription medicine was a big deal for me at those time periods, improved my life, and may have even saved it.

LD 1496 helps people keep access to prescription medicine, so that if a doctor or PA or NP prescribes a medicine, bureaucratic red tape doesn't get in the way of the prescription making its way to the patient. I actually have had multiple prior authorization issues with my healthcare providers. It usually goes like this: Go to get the prescription at the pharmacy. Those hard-working, kind, knowledgeable pharmacists at the counter say, "I'm sorry but it looks like there is a prior authorization issue with your prescription." "Okay, no problem, I understand, stuff happens," I say. "So, you need to call your doctor's office and let them know that there is a PA issue that needs to be resolved." I have had this happen at least three times. There are so many rules and sub-rules to follow, and adjustments that need to be made, when a patient's medication dose changes. Or, when a needed prescription is added. So many things can cause a prior authorization issue when somebody goes to pick up their medicine at the pharmacy counter.

I have even had this take 7 or 8 phone calls - between myself, the doctor's office, and the insurance company. Almost like a game of musical chairs or something. When this happened a couple months ago, I went without my prescription for about one full week, which led to pretty tough insomnia—almost no sleep for a week. I am lucky that I had a good support system of family and friends around me when I was in rough shape from lack of sleep that week. Fortunately, the authorization was resolved, and I am doing better now. But, when I was trying to get that situation sorted out during that stormy week, with no sleep; it was like trying to find a flashlight in the pitch dark. The no sleep situation made it so that it required a lot of courage and persistence to keep tasks and projects going, and to keep the ball rolling on the attempts to solve the Prior Authorization hurdle.

Stepping back a bit, sometimes, maybe it helps to think not just about laws and regulations, but about the real Mainers who are impacted by these laws. We all are so lucky to have friends and family and dads and moms and brothers and cousins. So, can I ask you, how do you feel about your brothers and sons and daughters? I bet you love them a lot. And I bet that you would want to make sure that if there was a prescription medicine that would give them a helping hand to make their day easier and better—I bet you would want your mom, or sister or son or dad or friend, to leave the pharmacy counter saying "Thank you for your help with my prescription, have a good one."