



March 27, 2019

Senate Committee on Health Care
The Honorable Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair

RE: Support for Senate Bill 887

Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

I am writing to urge your support of Senate Bill 887.

I became an acupuncturist to make a positive impact in the lives of my patients. I have seen acupuncture address and treat a wide array of health complaints and effectively treat pain. Acupuncture is often considered a medicine of last resort and patients frequently seek out acupuncture after they have tried everything else and generally find relief. Acupuncture is a relatively low cost, effective, non-pharmacologic approach to addressing an array of health complaints, including chronic pain.

The majority of my patients pay for acupuncture with health insurance purchased through their employer. With each passing year we see more and more limits placed on these insurance plans through utilization management programs. These programs create multiple barriers to patient care and place undue administrative burdens on the health care providers who are mostly small business owners.

With utilization management programs there are often delays in patient's receiving care while waiting for a prior authorization to get approved. These programs often require patients to be seen for an initial evaluation and then have to come back at a later date to receive the care. This can be weeks later as schedules often don't match up and the patient is left waiting to receive the care they need.

In addition, it is impossible to effectively treat chronic pain with utilization management programs. Current standards under these programs will only approve continued treatment if the patient is showing sustained and continued improvement. With chronic pain sufferers they are often in a situation that requires management of their symptoms and are usually cut off from treatment under these programs. How does it make sense to allow patients to manage their pain with opiates for years and cut them off from a treatment that is working, that has no negative side effects, and is relatively inexpensive to administer?



Lastly, utilization management programs are a hardship on the health care providers. It takes significant time to manage the paperwork required with these programs. Often providers are faced with malfunctioning websites, fax numbers that don't go through and spending large amounts of time on the phone to deal with issues. Every new layer of administration cuts into already narrow margins and threatens the existence of small businesses like mine. SB 887 would help address this issue by allowing patients to use their acupuncture benefit as a low-cost treatment and prevent the need for costlier interventions.

I urge you to vote yes for this bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Jean Brinkman