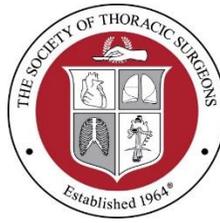


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June 11, 2019

Sent via email

The Honorable Ami Bera
1727 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Kelly
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan DelBene
2330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roger Marshall
312 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: The Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act

Dear Congressman Bera, Congresswoman DelBene, Congressman Kelly, and Congressman Marshall,

On behalf of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), I am pleased to write in support of the bipartisan legislation, The Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act, which would increase transparency and streamline prior authorization in the Medicare Advantage program. Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 7,600 surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lungs, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest. The mission of the Society is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.

This bill will allow clinicians, particularly cardiothoracic surgeons, to continue providing the highest quality patient care to those enrolled in the Medicare Advantage program. While we acknowledge that prior authorization can be an effective resource management tool, insurers are using prior authorization to hinder access to necessary treatment for our patients. Therefore, we applaud this bipartisan effort to streamline the prior authorization process by creating an electronic submission process, eliminating the need for another prior authorization for an additional medically necessary procedure during the perioperative period, and establish a process for "real time decision" for procedures that are routinely approved. Importantly, the reduction of paperwork by requiring electronic prior authorization will allow cardiothoracic surgeons to spend more time with their patients.

While we appreciate the provisions included in this legislation, we urge you to include language that will eliminate the need for prior authorization for a procedure that needs to be rescheduled or a procedure that is needed in follow-up to the initial procedure or treatment. This will allow clinicians to act rapidly to address any complications without the need to delay treatment while waiting for an additional prior authorization.

STS remains fully committed to improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of care for all patients. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. Please contact Courtney Yohe Savage, STS Director of Government Relations, at cyohe@sts.org or 202-787-1230 should you need additional information or clarification. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Robert S.D. Higgins, MD
President