

Senate Bill 2280
Industry and Business Committee
69th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
February 5, 2025

Dear Chairman Barta and Committee Members,

My name is Joan Connell. As a pediatrician, parent, and North Dakota citizen, I am asking you to VOTE YES on SB 2280. The delay in receipt or lack of receipt of optimal medical care due to problems with prior authorization affects my patients every day.

This hits most frequently and hardest at the Children's Regional Asthma Clinic I hold in Bismarck. In spite of the national guidelines for pediatric asthma changing in late 2019, there are insurance companies that continue to deny medications that are recommended in the guidelines. Some insurance companies, including ND Medicaid, refuse to reimburse Symbicort, the only asthma combination inhaler that contains a low potency steroid, which I prefer to prescribe for patients due to adverse effects on growth that we have seen with high potency steroid inhalers. They tell me that the industry says this is not a concern, yet I have 5-10 patients in my clinic who would disagree because of their documented medication-associated drop off in height gain. Last month, we had a family ask for refills of epinephrine pens that two of their children need due to a history of severe allergic reaction/anaphylaxis. We refilled the script, which was denied. We then looked up the insurance company's listed formulary and prescribed the epinephrine pen that was listed. This too was denied. We then had to take more time to call the insurance company to ask exactly what they would like us to prescribe. While that was a complete waste of a lot of clinical time, the real disaster is that during that 2+ week interim, those kids did not have epinephrine pens. Thank God they did not have a severe allergic reaction during that time.

While I could continue with examples from each day, I think the benefit of this bill has been adequately illustrated with the above examples. Please VOTE YES on SB 2280 so patients can receive optimal therapy when they seek care.