



January 23, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Byron, Chair
House Commerce and Energy Committee
900 E Main St
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Chair Byron and Members of the House Commerce and Energy Committee,

The Virginia Association of Hematologists and Oncologists (VAHO) and the Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) are pleased to support HB 1471, which requires health insurance carriers to establish and maintain an electronic prior authorization process.

VAHO is a professional organization whose mission is to help foster the highest quality of cancer care in the state of Virginia. VAHO members are a community of oncologists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other allied health professionals deeply involved in care of our cancer patients. ASCO is a national organization representing physicians who care for people with cancer. With nearly 45,000 members, our core mission is to ensure that cancer patients have meaningful access to high quality, equitable cancer care.

VAHO and ASCO are committed to supporting policies that reduce cost while preserving quality of cancer care; however, it is critical that such policies be developed and implemented in a way that does not undermine patient access. Payer utilization management approaches like prior authorization are of particular concern because they represent greater likelihood of raising barriers to appropriate care for individuals with cancer.

Time-consuming, labor-intensive prior authorization processes add significantly to burdens already facing physicians and patients. While many prior authorizations may be initiated electronically via individual payer portals, subsequent interactions and requests for additional information are frequently conducted via fax or phone, leading to delayed communication, slower response times, and delays in patient care. A 2021 study from the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH) found that only 26% of prior authorization requests are handled fully electronically, while 35% were fully manual (submitted by phone, fax, e-mail, or mail).

Although barriers imposed by prior authorization will not be resolved solely by implementing an electronic process, electronic prior authorization has the potential to improve transparency and efficiency and reduce physician burden, and we urge the Committee to pass this bill. For a more detailed understanding of our policy recommendations on this issue, we invite you to read the [ASCO Position Statement: Prior Authorization](#). If you have any questions about prior authorization, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Lanford at Sarah.Lanford@asco.org.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Richard Ingram in black ink.

Richard Ingram, MD
President
Virginia Association of Hematologists and Oncologists

Handwritten signature of Lori J. Pierce in black ink.

Lori J. Pierce, MD, FASTRO, FASCO
President
Association for Clinical Oncology