



September 27, 2018

Shamim Nagy, MD, Chairman
Nevada Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Care Financing and Policy
1100 East William Street, Suite 101
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Chair Nagy and Members of the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee:

On behalf of the Epilepsy Foundation and our local chapter, Epilepsy Foundation of Nevada, we are writing to urge you to ensure open access to epilepsy medication – anticonvulsants – on the state Medicaid preferred drug list. Epilepsy medications are not interchangeable, and treatment of epilepsy is highly individualized. Limiting access to lifesaving medications and interrupting proven treatment regimens due to drug formulary changes intended to cut costs can result in harmful changes to patient therapies and are far costlier to the Medicaid program in the long run.

The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading national voluntary health organization that speaks on behalf of the at least 3.4 million Americans with epilepsy and seizures, including almost 62,000 Nevadans. We foster the wellbeing of children and adults affected by seizures through research programs, educational activities, advocacy, and direct services. Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime. For people living with epilepsy, timely access to appropriate, physician-directed care, including epilepsy medications, is a critical concern. Epilepsy medications are the most common and cost-effective treatment for controlling and/or reducing seizures. To delay, change, limit, or deny access to medications could be extremely dangerous.

The Epilepsy Foundation and Epilepsy Foundation of Nevada support open access to epilepsy medications and oppose any formulary changes that would severely restrict access, and to any policies that would require multiple failures or prior authorization before non-preferred medications can be secured. Failure to have access to the appropriate medication can result in increased or breakthrough seizures, injury, accidents, additional medical and hospitalizations costs, loss of earnings, and can even cause an unexpected death. The mortality rate among people with epilepsy is two to three times higher than the general population and the risk of sudden death is 24 times greater.

The very health and wellbeing of most individuals with epilepsy is dependent, to a great extent, on their anti-epileptic medications. Thus, people with epilepsy and their medical providers are very concerned about the availability and access to anti-epileptic drugs. This is due to the unique nature of epilepsy and different response to each medication. This is why many states and the federal Medicaid program provide for access to all epilepsy medications.

Selection of the appropriate medication to prevent seizures is determined by a number of variables, including type of seizure, seizure frequency, age, gender, and other health conditions. Determining the



right medication for a particular person may require trial-and-error, along with close observation of blood levels and side effects. For these reasons, physicians and their patients need to be assured that the full array of treatment options is available without onerous utilization management protocols, including alternative formulations of a drug such as extended release versions that are particularly important for disease management and patient compliance among the individuals with multiple complex and chronic conditions. The treating physician is in the best position to make the judgement about which medication is most appropriate.

The Epilepsy Foundation and Epilepsy Foundation of Nevada supports maintaining access to physician-directed care. Policies intended to restrict access unnecessarily prolong ineffective treatment and prevent individuals from immediately starting treatment that their physicians, who provide care based on their expert knowledge and experience, think is best. We urge you to maintain open access to epilepsy medications on the state's preferred drug list. Please feel free to contact Abbey Roudebush, Government Relations Manager, at aroudebush@efa.org or 301-918-3784 with any questions or follow up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Marano".

Danielle Marano
Executive Director
Epilepsy Foundation of Nevada

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip M. Gattone".

Philip M. Gattone, M.Ed.
President & CEO
Epilepsy Foundation