

Testimony of Heather Greene in Support of HB 6360

March 1, 2011

My name is Heather Greene. I am a resident of Waterbury, and am a mother of two girls, ages 4 and 11 years. I also am the one Medicaid consumer on the Medicaid Care Management Oversight Council. I am here today in support of HB 6360.

Let me share my story with you today.

My 11 year old daughter suffers from severe allergy problems as well as asthma. Over the past couple of years, her medications were dispensed but requiring Prior Authorization for any future supplies, without the pharmacy notifying me of this.

Let me explain.

One time I went and was given my 11 year old daughter's medication. I drove off, not even thinking to check the quantity that was given to me at the time. After about a week, I noticed she was running low on the medication. That is when I looked at the quantity that had been given. I had been given 14 days worth of her allergy medication, not the 30 day supply she had been prescribed. I decided to call the pharmacy to see why I had not been given the 30 day supply, as I thought I should have received since no one at the pharmacy ever mentioned any problems at the time when I picked her medication up. The pharmacy said that the prescription required "PA," which is prior authorization. I asked them why I was not told that when I picked my daughter's medication up. They told me that they are suppose to tell me when they give me only a 14 day temporary supply that PA is required for any additional supplies, and that the person giving me the prescription must have just forgotten.

This for me was unacceptable, because it meant that Medicaid and HUSKY enrollees like me often do not know that there is a problem with accessing a medication, until they return the second time, after the one-time 14 day supply has been used up, and this time they walk out with nothing. Relying upon busy pharmacists, with people in line, to orally explain this to Medicaid enrollees, and hoping the enrollees will understand it enough to take the necessary action, is a recipe for disaster. It is not the pharmacist's fault, but the result is that low-income people on Medicaid, lacking other means to pay for their denied drugs, go untreated.

Because I called that day, I was able to have the pharmacy contact my daughter's doctor to ask him to request the prior authorization. But if I hadn't called, I would not know. In fact, these temporary supplies with no information about PA for future supplies has happened to

me on numerous other occasions. But because I am on the Medicaid Council and understand how these systems work, I now always check the quantity given before I leave the pharmacy now.

I understand how prior authorization and temporary supplies work, but what happens to those who don't. Something needs to be done to notify people about what is going on with their prescription medications, and they should know what their rights are. Providing notice in writing means that there won't be a problem with pharmacists forgetting to mention the need to take action, with worried Medicaid enrollees (some who don't speak English well) not understanding what is being said, and with confused enrollees not remembering exactly what steps need to be taken to prevent a drug access problem.

My 11 year old daughter was always going to the doctors and being put on antibiotics at least once a month due to very severe sinus infections. After seeing an allergist and getting this one prescription, she has not had another sinus infection in a good 4-5 months. What would have happened if I didn't know what to do for my daughter, and what my rights for her were, as so many others do not know about? Look at the money it can save just with my daughter no longer needing to go for an appointment at the doctor's or at the emergency room once or twice a month because the pediatrician is closed and she is severely ill and in need of antibiotics so much. Now that the state is taking back the financial risk of providing all health care under HUSKY, these unnecessary emergency room visits caused by drug access problems will be at the state's direct expense.

On another occasion, my 4 year old was recently seen by the same allergist and tested positive for allergies after being sick for a good month. My 4 year old was prescribed the same allergy medication as her older sister.

When we got to the pharmacy, my husband went to the back of the store to pick up any prescriptions that were ready for pick up at that time. My husband was told that our 4 year old daughter's allergy medication was "NOT COVERED." My husband found me at the front of the store and when he told me this I immediately went to the back of the store and politely asked for a printout that stated that the medication was not covered, since I knew that all drugs were covered for kids under HUSKY They sent me over to another technician, who pulled up the computer screen about the prescription, and stated that, actually, it only said that the medication required "PRIOR AUTHORIZATION."

How many people walk out of the pharmacy without their prescriptions or their child's prescription because they are told by busy pharmacists and pharmacy technicians that they are not covered, instead of that they need prior authorization? We can't blame pharmacists for this, because it is not their responsibility to try to interpret the computer messages they

are receiving from DSS's computer system. But people on Husky just walk away and figure they have to go without the medication because they are unable to afford paying for it, so they needlessly go without. This is a very big problem in our state.

That is why I am asking you to think of all of the innocent children and their families who go without the medical care they need because they are misinformed at the pharmacy counter.

This bill will fix these problems by requiring a written notice to promptly be provided to people like me, whenever they either are denied a drug entirely or get only a one-time temporary supply which will not be renewed without specific steps being taken with the doctor to get PA or to get another drug prescribed.

I ask that you pass favorably on HB 6360.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.