



Physicians Caring for Texans

**Improving Timeliness of Patient Care: Gold Carding and Peer-to-Peer  
House Insurance Committee  
House Bill 3459 by Rep. Greg Bonnen, MD  
Physician Testimony by Lisa Ehrlich, MD  
April 13, 2021**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members, for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dr. Lisa Ehrlich, and I am an internist from Houston. Today, I am testifying on behalf of the Texas Medical Association and its more than 55,000 physician and medical student members across Texas **in support of House Bill 3459.**

I want to begin by thanking Chair Bonnen for filing this legislation. This bill includes important reforms designed to address long-standing issues with health plan prior authorization processes – processes that often act as unnecessary barriers to efficient care delivery and enrollee coverage.

Working with my patients every day, I find the use of prior authorizations by health plans to be anything but good for the patient.

This firsthand experience is echoed in results from TMA's recent survey of Texas physicians. In this survey, 78% of Texas physicians said prior authorizations have led to patient abandonment of care, and 38% said they have affected care delivery and led to a serious adverse event.

Furthermore, a TMA survey of the public indicates that one-quarter of Texas patients have had health plans refuse to cover their doctor's recommended care. And 71% of patients who are denied care either pay for it themselves, go without care, or suffer. Thus, prior authorization processes can have a very real and detrimental impact on the health of Texas patients.

Prior authorization processes also can be very burdensome on a physician practice and wasteful of limited physician resources, particularly when a physician has a particular service approved the vast majority of the time yet still has to complete all the paperwork to get the health plan's prior approval. In these circumstances, patient access to timely health care suffers as does a physician's available time to spend with patients.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.