

May 6, 2020

The Honorable Laurie Halverson Chair  
Commerce Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
503 State Office Building  
St Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Halverson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Niermann and I'm a pediatrician and Medical Director at Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House File 3398.

As many of you know, for over 120 years, Gillette has cared for children who have some of the most complex, traumatic, and rare conditions. Many of our patients require lifelong care, but thanks to innovative medical and surgical interventions along with assistive technology, our patients can reach their fullest potential. I acknowledge the role of prior authorization, but the process needs to be improved. Over the past several years, growing prior authorization requirements have negatively impacted Gillette patients, families, physicians, and nurses.

Gillette provides highly specialized care, and many of our services require prior authorization on a regular basis. In recent years, the number of prior authorization requests we're submitting has increased, but our number of denied requests has remained about the same. We have had to hire more staff to work exclusively on submitting, processing, and appealing prior authorization requests. One of our biggest struggles is with delayed response time, and we appreciate that this bill shortens the time process for the initial determination and for the appeal.

We also appreciate the requirement that a physician reviewer for the appeal of an adverse determination have the same or similar medical specialty experience. This is meaningful when you are a specialty children's hospital with a pediatric patient population with the highest acuity levels in the state. Let me give you one example of how the prior authorization process has directly impacted a Gillette patient and family:

We care for a child who needed genetic testing to distinguish whether he had cerebral palsy or a rare genetic disorder. The initial prior authorization request was denied but was then successfully appealed. The process took over 2 months. I would like to share with you his mother's own words about this experience:

**Clinic locations:**

Brainerd Lakes  
Burnsville  
Duluth  
Mankato  
Maple Grove  
Minnetonka  
Phalen  
St. Paul  
Willmar



*"It's hard enough being a parent of a child who has more advanced medical needs. From rearranging your life and work to get them to their appointments, to also dealing with the emotional toll it can take upon your family, it's a lot. You have to become a part-time medical expert in addition to being a full-time parent and caregiver. The process for obtaining prior authorizations in a timely and transparent manner certainly can, and should, be improved."*

For the many steps this bill will take to improve and reform the prior authorization process I ask for your support. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Micah Niermann MD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Micah Niermann, MD  
Chief Medical Officer and Vice President of Clinical Affairs  
Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare

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