May 25, 2021

The Honorable Suzan K. DelBene
U.S. House of Representatives
42330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Improving Seniors’ Timely Access to Care Act of 2021

Dear Congresswoman DelBene,

On behalf of OCHIN, I offer support for Improving Seniors’ Timely Access to Care Act of 2021, which would require streamlined and automated prior authorization electronic processes for Medicare Advantage (MA) plans, leveraging national standards while increasing patient and provider transparency and oversight by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). OCHIN is a national nonprofit health innovation and research network that serves over 500 community health care sites (including 20% of the country’s federally qualified health centers) with 21,000 providers in 47 states serving nearly 6 million patients. For two decades, OCHIN and our members have advanced equity in health care through technology and innovation for patients and their providers in underserved communities. This legislation is an important step forward to remedy the fractured, costly, and complex prior authorization processes that are ubiquitous among federal and state health care programs administered by third parties and commercial health plans.

The burden of prior authorization falls heaviest on patients and providers in underserved communities and community health providers that have limited staff and resources to coordinate, communicate, and document, often repeatedly, the medical necessity of services and treatment. The rapid and widespread growth of prior authorization, all too often without any clinical validity and transparency, represents an extreme form of structural inequality that drives worse health care outcomes and diverts limited clinical time to administrative paperwork. Since patients served by community-based health care organizations are often more medically and socially complex, the expansion of prior authorization has constrained efforts to provide holistic patient care and has limited the ability of providers to address social determinants of health.

We also urge policymakers to expand these requirements to all health insurers so that clinicians and patients are not burdened with costly paperwork requirements that delay necessary medical care and lead to worse health outcomes. OCHIN welcomes the opportunity to continue...
working with you to advance this legislation. If you have questions, please contact me at stollJ@ochin.org.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Stoll
Executive Vice President
Government Relations & Public Affairs