Senate Bill 5551

Restoring access to treatment for people living with HIV

The background
In 2018, the Health Care Authority stopped covering new HIV treatments for Apple Health members unless the members' provider can prove that their patient meets specific criteria.

The problem
- HIV disproportionately impacts people who are also experiencing challenges like houselessness and substance-use disorder.
- Members of this population often need simpler, more manageable HIV treatment regimens to stick to their medication, but barriers like the ones HCA has created can prevent people from accessing a regimen that work for them.
- When people living with HIV can't adhere to their treatment, they not only experience poor health outcomes, but may also develop permanent resistance to their medications and transmit HIV to others.

In this way, restricting access to HIV treatment medications undermines Washington's efforts to end the HIV epidemic, calls into question the state's commitment to equity, and increases our overall health costs.

The bill
SB 5551 brings Washington back into alignment with best practices and its own strategic goals, by requiring HCA (and managed care plans that contract with HCA) to provide coverage without prior authorization for all FDA-approved HIV treatment medications.

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