

Groups Urge Inclusion of Patient Review Programs in Opioids Bill

MARY ELLEN MCINTIRE | MAY 27, 2016

A handful of healthcare companies and research groups are urging top committee leaders negotiating a final opioids bill to authorize the use of patient review and restriction programs for Medicare plans.

The House and Senate will convene a conference committee to work out the differences between the two opioid packages.

Authorization of such programs is included in the Senate bill, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. The programs identify patients who are at risk of abusing a prescription drug and ensure that they can only access prescription pain killers through certain prescribers and pharmacies. The programs are already used in Medicaid, and lobbyists say there is broad support to apply them to Medicare.

The companies signing the letter (<https://morningconsult.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Joint-letter-to-Conferees-052716.pdf>), including Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, CVS Health and Express Scripts, Inc., say the “programs can play an important role in preventing prescription drug misuse and diversion by assigning patients who are at risk for substance use disorders to designated pharmacies and prescribers to obtain drugs that are subject to abuse.”

They also urge that the programs be authorized to cover additional controlled substances that are not currently included in the Senate bill.

“Expanding the scope of these programs to include controlled substances beyond [Drug Enforcement Administration] schedule II would allow plan sponsors the flexibility to address current and future patterns of drug misuse,” they write.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy, the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association, and the Health Care Service Corporation also signed the letter.

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