



March 8, 2024

Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Commerce
120 4th St, Room 105
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Bjorkman and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Commerce,

The Denali Oncology Group and the Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) are pleased to support SB 219, which would reduce administrative burden for physicians in Alaska.

The Denali Oncology Group's primary mission is to promote, plan, support, represent, advocate for, and conduct educational and scientific activities to facilitate improvements in the practice of oncology and the delivery of care to patients for the benefit of the citizens and residents of the State of Alaska. ASCO is a national organization representing physicians who care for people with cancer. With nearly 50,000 members, our core mission is to ensure that cancer patients have meaningful access to high quality, equitable cancer care.

Prior authorization requires patients or their providers to secure pre-approval as a condition of payment or insurance coverage of services. In a recent ASCO survey, 80% of respondents said that a patient has experienced significant impacts on their health, such as disease progress, because of prior authorization processes. The most common harms to patients include delays in treatment (95%) and diagnostic imaging (94%), patients being forced onto second-choice therapy (93%) or denied therapy (87%) and increased out-of-pocket costs (88%). These survey responses confirm that prior authorization results in unnecessary delays or denials of cancer care.

The Denali Oncology Group and ASCO are committed to supporting policies that reduce cost while preserving quality of cancer care; however, it is important that these policies are developed and implemented in a way that does not undermine patient access. Payer utilization management approaches like prior authorization are of particular concern because they represent greater likelihood of raising barriers to appropriate and timely care for patients with cancer. While many treatments preferred by payers cost less, they may not be the best treatment available for the patient. Furthermore, the burden on practices in terms of employee resource utilization dedicated to preauthorization is onerous.

SB 219 would offer providers that have at least an 80% approval rate of prior authorization requests over a 12-month period an exemption. A well-earned exemption for providers that have a proven track

record of prior authorization approvals will allow doctors to skip the burdensome prior authorization process, ultimately resulting in more-timely delivery of care to patients.

The Denali Oncology Group and ASCO support SB 219 and encourage the Committee to pass this legislation to ensure that physicians most familiar with their patients' health care needs can provide timely care. For a more detailed understanding of our policy recommendations on this issue, we invite you to read the [ASCO Position Statement: Prior Authorization](#). Please contact Sarah Lanford at ASCO at Sarah.Lanford@asco.org if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Mary Klix, MD
President
Denali Oncology Group

Everett Vokes, MD, FASCO
Chair of the Board
Association for Clinical Oncology