



Building Stronger Communities One Project at a Time

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May 20, 2022

To the West Virginia Drug Utilization Review Board Meeting,

I wanted to submit comments prior to your upcoming meeting on behalf of [Community Education Group](#). Community Education Group is a West Virginia based non-profit working to combat the syndemic of HIV, viral hepatitis, and substance use in the state and across the Appalachian region.

As I'm sure you know, West Virginia faces a crisis when it comes to hepatitis. There are more than 20,000 documented cases of Hep C in the state, which is certainly low due to underreporting and a lack of testing. Acute HCV infections in WV continue to rise despite a stable trend across the nation.

As you discuss prior-authorization criteria for HCV drugs next week, **we urge you to consider avenues to increase access to those who desperately need the cure for HCV. Though HCV treatment may be costly, not treating will cost the state and healthcare system more money in the long-term.**

In particular, **I urge you to lift sobriety requirements for accessing treatment.** New cases of HCV are largely due to the opioid epidemic and are most prevalent amongst people struggling with injection drug use and addiction. All the medical treatment guidelines are clear that we need to treat these individuals when they present, not delay care or require sobriety to access the curative medications. 44 states now impose no minimum period of abstinence, but West Virginia has continued with a 3-month abstinence policy.

We also hope you will also continue to evaluate criteria about who prescribes and provides consultation for HCV treatment. The West Virginia Hepatitis Academic Mentoring Partnership of the West Virginia Rural Health Association has done valuable work to connect primary and addiction care providers to link with disease experts for hepatitis C training. We should continue to evaluate what education programs are in place and if requirements to consult with specialists signing off on patient cases can create delays in patient care.

If I can provide additional feedback or comments on specific changes you may consider, don't hesitate to reach out if I can provide additional information.

-Lee Storrow  
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Community Education Group

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