

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 1437 without my signature.

This bill would require the Medi-Cal program to automatically approve any prescription refill for serious mental illness (SMI) for a period of 365 days after the initial prescription is dispensed for a beneficiary 18 years or older.

I appreciate the author's intent to increase Medi-Cal beneficiaries' access and adherence to SMI drugs. However, this approach does not address the underlying obstacles with medication adherence and would remove clinical safeguards. Currently most medications used for an SMI are covered without prior authorization, and if prior authorization is needed, DHCS provides a response within 24 hours and allows emergency coverage of a drug up to 14 days. In instances where prior authorization is required, it is in place for patient safety. Maintaining utilization control is important to contain health care costs, protect patients, and ensure medically necessary care.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom