

IMPROVING KENTUCKY'S ACCESS TO SMOKING CESSATION COVERAGE

Physicians play a critical role in helping smokers access proven tools to help them quit, including counseling and medications. Unfortunately, many who want to quit face barriers to these treatments. The KMA supports legislation requiring Kentucky health plans, both commercial and Medicaid, to cover all FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)-recommended tobacco cessation services, including counseling, without barriers to access.

THE ISSUE

Kentucky's high smoking rates lead to increased instances of preventable disease and premature death; many Kentuckians are often denied barrier-free access to proven tobacco cessation treatments by health plans.

- Kentucky's statewide smoking rate of 26 percent ranks among the highest in the nation and contributes to nearly 9,000 deaths each year.
- Some Kentucky health plans do not cover evidence-based tobacco cessation treatments or impose harmful barriers that impede access to these critical tools.

THE PROBLEM

Many Kentucky commercial plans and Medicaid managed care organizations either fail to cover FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and USPSTF-recommended cessation services. When they do provide coverage, these insurers impose complicated barriers to access, meaning patients may be denied or delayed access to the treatments prescribed by their provider.

- It is important to protect the patient/provider relationship so patients have access to the treatments their providers prescribe without harmful barriers such as step therapy, cost sharing and prior authorization.
- Inconsistencies in coverage and plan benefits create confusion among providers and patients about the availability of treatments, which means fewer Kentuckians are utilizing tobacco cessation benefits.

THE SOLUTION

Legislation is needed to require all Kentucky health plans – both commercial and Medicaid – to provide barrier-free coverage for all FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications and USPSTF-recommended tobacco cessation services. Doing so will not only save lives but will also save valuable taxpayer dollars.

- Providing coverage for all evidence-based tobacco cessation treatments is critical to reversing Kentucky's longstanding high rate of tobacco use once and for all.
- Comprehensive coverage that includes all forms of evidence-based cessation treatments increases the rate at which tobacco users quit, according to the CDC.
- This legislation would ensure tobacco cessation coverage stays consistent over time – ultimately saving lives and taxpayer dollars, according to the Legislative Research Commission's own fiscal impact statement from 2016.

Please Support Senate Bill 89

