

ASTRO voices support for new prior authorization legislation

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The American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) is championing bipartisan legislation introduced Wednesday, June 5, that would reduce prior authorization practices found to delay patient access to necessary cancer treatments.

The *Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act* of 2019 (H.R. 3107) was introduced by Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-Wash.), Rep. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.), Rep. Roger Marshall, MD (R-Kan.) and Rep. Ami Bera, MD (D-Calif.)

According to ASTRO, the legislation, if passed, would improve transparency of the prior authorization process and remedy unnecessary delays for those covered by Medicare Advantage plans.

Such plans would be required to provide relevant information, such as annual disclosure of medical treatments that require prior authorization, the proportion of approved and denied requests and the average time for approval. HR 3107 also includes an electronic prior authorization process to help streamline decisions and avoid delays.

The legislation incorporates key measures addressed in a February [letter](#) to CMS signed by ASTRO, the American Medical Association (AMA) and numerous other medical societies.

"While the system was designed as a path to streamline and strengthen access to treatments, it is in fact frequently harmful to cancer patients who are prescribed radiation therapy, particularly by wasting precious time and causing immense anxiety," said Paul Harari, MD, ASTRO Chair, in a [prepared statement](#). "We applaud Reps. DelBene, Kelly, Marshall and Bera for their leadership in introducing this bipartisan legislation to bring needed reform to a broken system."

Back in April, ASTRO released [results of a member survey](#) in which radiation oncologists unanimously agreed that prior authorization practices delay proper care for their patients. One-third of those surveyed said those delays lasted longer than five days—equal to a week-long regimen of standard radiation therapy.