



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH INSURANCE COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH HEALTH INSURERS TO  
END PRIOR AUTHORIZATION FOR OPIOID DEPENDENCY MEDICATIONS**

*Agreements reached with all of Rhode Island's major commercial insurers*

CRANSTON, RI May 17, 2017—Dr. Kathleen Hittner, Health Insurance Commissioner for the State of Rhode Island, announced on Wednesday that she has executed agreements with all major commercial health insurers in the state to end the practice of requiring prior authorization for certain prescription drugs used to treat patients with opioid dependence disorders.

“I am very pleased to announce these agreements, which will greatly improve access to necessary medications for patients with opioid dependence disorders,” Commissioner Hittner said. “Working together with Rhode Island’s health insurers, we’ve found a way to streamline processes for coverage of these treatments. I am grateful for the insurers’ collaboration and commitment to fighting this public health crisis.”

All four major health insurers – Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, Tufts Health Plan, and United Healthcare—joined in the agreement to eliminate prior authorizations for patients prescribed medications such as buprenorphine and Suboxone, often referred to as “Medication Assisted Treatment” or MAT. The agreements will allow opioid dependent patients more timely access to medications.

The Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner is currently conducting a Market Conduct Examination for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Parity. Commissioner Hittner said the ongoing examination “led my staff and me to reach out to the insurance carriers and begin to consider ways to improve access to MAT.”

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**About the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner** *The Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) was established by legislation in 2004 to broaden the accountability of health insurers operating in the state of Rhode Island. Under this legislation, the Office is dedicated to: (1.) Protecting consumers (2.) Encouraging fair treatment of medical service providers (3.) Ensuring solvency of health insurers (4.) Improving the health care system's*

Protecting Consumers • Ensuring Solvency • Engaging Providers • Improving the System

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*quality, accessibility and affordability. The Office sets and enforces standards for health insurers in each of these four areas. [www.ohic.ri.gov](http://www.ohic.ri.gov)*