



CRA April 2021 Newsletter

Greetings!

The California Rheumatology Alliance remains dedicated to providing updated news and resources to our membership related to COVID-19. We appreciate and encourage any feedback to assist in our service to our members.

If there are any topics you are interested in and would like for us to cover via webinar, please email info@calrheum.org.

[Visit our Website](#)

CRA TESTIFIES IN SUPPORT OF AB 347

As we have discussed in previous newsletters, the top priority for the CRA is AB 347 by Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula. CRA is partnering with the Arthritis Foundation and the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation to sponsor the bill. This bill will make changes to the step therapy process including establishing a number of standard exceptions for when a patient does not need to go through step therapy as well as putting in place definitive time frames for when a health plan must give providers an answer to prior authorization and step therapy exception requests.

[AB 347](#) was heard in the Assembly Health Committee earlier this week on Tuesday, April 6th and CRA President, Samy Metyas, MD, was the lead witness to testify in Committee on why the bill is necessary to ensure the patients' health will not be put at risk due to these obstacles. The bill passed with a vote of 13-1.

Additionally, Dr. Metyas also jointly wrote an Op-Ed on the need for AB 347 that was published in Capitol Weekly which is the main news source for Sacramento Capitol insiders and Legislators. A copy of the Op-Ed can be found on our website by [clicking here](#).

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Ring in a new year brings a fresh start, a clean slate and a brand new membership year! To register to become a member or renew your CRA Membership, please visit our website to pay your 2021 dues:

[MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION](#)

As a reminder, when you become a CRA Member, you also have access to various benefits including membership to Tickets At Work. From healthy workout subscriptions to grocery services, there are amazing options to ensure our safety as California continues its stay-at-home mandate. To sign up, follow the instructions below:

1. Click the link below
2. Fill out the form to become a Tickets at Work member (please use the same email address as you do for CRA communications)
3. Enter Company Code "ALLIANCE17"
4. Enjoy the savings!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

April is a busy time for the California Legislature. The policy committees are trying to hear the more than 2,400 bills that have been introduced.

Please see below for a list of bills CRA is currently tracking:

- The California Chronic Care Coalition, which CRA is a member, is sponsoring [AB 752 \(Nazarian\)](#) to require health plans to provide patients and physicians, upon consent from the patient, access to a “real time benefit tool” that will assist the patient in understanding the cost to acquire the needed medication which will improve a patient’s ability to begin therapy without delay. CRA will be a main witness when this bill is heard in the Assembly Health Committee on April 13th.
- [SB 758 \(Pan\)](#) would lower out-of-pocket costs for consumers by requiring that certain medicines and benefits used to treat chronic disease be covered without subjecting patients to a deductible.
- You may recall over the past few years’ legislation requiring physicians to disclose in writing to patients any remuneration received from pharmaceutical or medical Device companies. [AB 1278 \(Nazarian\)](#) has been introduced this year doing the same thing and promises to be another battle.
- [AB 80 \(Burke\)](#) would conform state law to be consistent with federal law as it relates to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans many practices may have received last year. This bill would exclude income from being included in state taxes if those loans were forgiven. The bill also allows businesses to deduct up to \$150,000 of business expenses that were paid for using forgiven PPP or Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) funds.

If you have any questions or would like additional information on any of these bills, please contact Tim Madden at madden@mqadvocacy.com.

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