



CRA May 2021 Newsletter

Greetings!

The California Rheumatology Alliance remains dedicated to providing updated news and resources to our membership. 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

SAVE THE DATE: 2021 CRA ANNUAL MEETING

We're happy to announce that we're back + looking forward to our upcoming meeting this year! Please save the date for the 17th Annual Medical & Scientific Meeting that will be held in conjunction with the UCLA Carl Pearson Symposium

October 8 - 12, 2021
Marina del Rey Marriott
Marina del Rey, CA

More information coming soon!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

May brings so many opportunities to celebrate Mother's Day, graduations, and Memorial Day. To take advantage of savings on gifts, make sure 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!

TICKETS AT WORK

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Senate and Assembly policy committees have finished hearing bills introduced in the respective Houses. The Assembly Health Committee heard a record number of bills this year and passed nearly all of them including a number of bills CRA has been advocating which are listed below. The next step in the legislative process is for bills to be heard in the Appropriations Committees which reviews the bills' fiscal impact on the State.

The Appropriations Committees have until May 21st to pass bills out of the committee. For bills in the Assembly found to have a fiscal impact of more than \$150,000 on the state or bills in the Senate found to have a fiscal impact on the state of more than \$50,000 they will be placed on what is called the "Suspense File". The "Suspense File" is dealt with at one time at the end of the May 21st deadline. This process exhibits the power the Appropriations Committees have as the decision for which bills pass off the Suspense File is largely left to the chair of the Committee.

After CRA President, Samy Metyas, MD, provided strong testimony on AB 347 in the Assembly Health hearing, the bill passed on a 13-1 vote. [AB 347 \(Arambula\)](#) is being co-sponsored by CRA, Arthritis Foundation, and Crohn's and Colitis Foundation to establish standard exceptions to step therapy, require decisions on prior authorization and step therapy exception requests be done with 72 hours or 24 hours for exigent situations, and require the payers' use a physician who is of the same or similar specialty as the treating physician when reviewing an appeal to a step therapy exception request. The bill was found to have state costs of more than \$150,000 and has been placed on the Suspense File.

Other bills CRA is tracking include:

- The California Chronic Care Coalition, which CRA is a member, is sponsoring [AB 752 \(Nazarian\)](#) to require payers 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. This will improve a patient's ability to begin therapy without delay due to unexpected costs discovered when filling the prescription at the pharmacy. CRA was a lead witness in the Assembly Health hearing where the bill passed out on a 13-0 vote. The bill was found to have state costs of more than \$150,000 and has been placed on the Suspense File.
- [SB 568 \(Pan\)](#) would lower out-of-pocket costs for consumers by requiring certain medicines and benefits used to treat chronic disease be covered without subjecting patients to a deductible. This bill passed out of the Senate Health Committee on a 9-2 vote. The bill was found to have state costs of more than \$50,000 and has been placed on the Suspense File.
- You may recall over the past few years' legislation requiring physicians to disclose in writing to patients any payment or transfer of value 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. CRA has had multiple meetings with the author's office and are discussing possible alternative approaches. CRA continues to Oppose the bill. The bill has passed the Assembly and is now in the Senate.
- [AB 80 \(Burke\)](#) would exclude forgiven Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) advance grants from gross income for state purposes, in conformity with federal law. This bill also conforms state law to federal law to allow deductions for those expenses that were paid for using forgiven PPP loan funds and EIDL advance grants. This bill, however, excludes two types of entities from deducting expenses paid for with forgiven PPP loans: entities that are publicly traded companies and taxpayers that did not experience at least a 25% reduction in gross receipts, as specified by federal law. **This bill has been signed by the Governor.**
- [SB 250 \(Pan\)](#) would provide a process for physicians who have a record of appropriate authorizations for medical treatment and prescribing to avoid going through burdensome prior authorization processes. This bill passed the Senate Health Committee on a 9-1 vote. The bill was found to have state costs of more than \$50,000 and has been placed on the Suspense File.

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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