

# Jeremy Thiesfeldt

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 52<sup>nd</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## **Testimony – Assembly Bill 116 Helping those in Nursing Homes w/ Severe Disabilities**

Hello, Chairman Sanfelippo and members of the Committee. Thank you for your time in allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 116, an important bill that will help people with severe disabilities who are in nursing homes have access to necessary equipment that will enhance their health and give them dignity.

The past two sessions, the Legislature has passed, and two different governors have signed into law, Complex Rehabilitation Technology bills. This bill follows those two bills and brings much-needed CRT equipment to those in nursing homes who need it the most. Currently, CRT equipment is covered one way for those living in homes and assisted living facilities, and it is covered a different way for those in nursing homes. This bill applies the same standard across all benefit areas to ensure consistency for CRT equipment.

This bill will also help nursing homes, Many nursing homes have a shortage of nurses and CNAs. This bill will free up nursing home staff time, as this bill will help these individuals with severe disabilities lead more independent lives. This is especially important during the time of COVID-19. We have seen how vulnerable nursing home residents are to the flu and to COVID-19, in addition to other viruses. Now is the perfect time for us to be taking up this legislation.

This bill, like the other two CRT bills, still ensures that any piece of CRT technology needs to be signed off by both a doctor and a physical therapist.

When looking at someone with a severe disability, it should not matter where they are located. They all deserve the same dignity and respect and access to much-needed medical equipment. In most cases, lack of access to this equipment can severely affect their physical health, in some cases even leading to premature death, their mental well-being, and their lives.

Thank you again for your time. I hope you are able to support and pass this important bill helping those with severe disabilities.



## PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: April 1, 2021  
RE: **Testimony on Assembly Bill 116**  
TO: The Assembly Committee on Health  
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

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Thank you Chairman Sanfelippo and Assembly Health committee members for hearing my testimony on Assembly Bill 116 (AB 116).

Currently, highly disabled individuals are covered by Medical Assistance and approved for power wheelchair technology if they live in a home-based setting. However, that approval is missing for individuals in a nursing home setting. In a nursing home setting, residents are required to call for assistance from a nurse or aide for some of the simplest tasks. These are tasks that could be accomplished if the resident had access to more independent mobility.

With COVID transmission in nursing homes an area of concern, this bill would be helpful in reducing unnecessary staff to client contact. If disabled residents are given the equipment needed to perform independent daily health and hygiene tasks, contacts can be reduced, and burdened staff can concentrate on other pressing responsibilities.

We will be introducing an amendment to the bill. There were some concerns expressed by the Department of Health Services and others as to whether this bill interfered with prior authorization. That is not the intent, so we agreed to draft language that stated it more plainly.

Please join Gundersen Health System, Numotion, Wisconsin Occupational Therapy Association and me in supporting this legislation.

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Health  
FROM: Tim Lundquist, Director of Government & Public Affairs  
Wisconsin Association of Health Plans  
RE: Assembly Bill 116  
DATE: April 1, 2021

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The Wisconsin Association of Health Plans appreciates the opportunity to comment on Assembly Bill 116, related to complex rehabilitation technology. The Wisconsin Association of Health Plans is the voice of 12 Wisconsin community-based health plans that provide government programs, employers, and individuals across Wisconsin access to high-quality health care. Many of these health plans partner with the state through Medicaid Managed Care, where they collectively serve 263,000 individuals in Wisconsin's Medicaid programs, including SSI and Family Care.

Medicaid health plans are proud to provide enrollees access to high-quality, high-value health care, including rehabilitation technology and adaptive and assistive devices. Medicaid health plans follow a process outlined in state law to evaluate the medical necessity of requested complex rehabilitation technology (CRT) devices and services. This process is designed to ensure a requested device or service is required to prevent, identify, or treat a recipient's illness, injury, or disability, and meets standards related to patient safety, quality of care, and cost-effectiveness. It also ensures Medicaid pays for services and equipment that are medically necessary and likely to improve health outcomes, as opposed to items solely of convenience or individual preference.

Initially, Association members were concerned Assembly Bill 116 would interfere with the current Medicaid prior authorization and medical review process. The Association has worked closely with the bill authors and bill advocates over the past several weeks to better understand the intended effect of Assembly Bill 116. Based on these conversations, it is our understanding that the bill is not meant to impact current health plan processes for review and approval of CRT devices and services.

**To clarify these issues, the Wisconsin Association of Health Plans urges committee members to amend Assembly Bill 116.** The authors have introduced an amendment to the Senate companion bill that addresses initial health plan concerns and clarifies the legislation does not impact the prior authorization or medical necessity review process (Senate Amendment 1 to Senate Bill 103). We urge the Committee to support an identical Assembly amendment.