

Testimony by Peter Levis & George Rontiris, Owners Titan Pharmacy

Senate Hearing on Workers' Compensation

May 15th, 2024

Chair Ramos and members of the Senate Labor Committee, thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Peter Levis, and I am joined by my partner George Rontiris. We have been licensed pharmacists in New York State for thirty years.

We are the owners of Titan Pharmacy, a small independent pharmacy in Astoria, Queens. Titan Pharmacy has been registered in New York State since December of 2000. Since its inception, for 24 years now, Titan Pharmacy has specialized in Workers' Compensation.

For years, our small business has fought to change an amendment that was made to the Workers' Compensation Law that allows insurance companies to dictate which pharmacies injured workers must patronize. In many cases the insurance companies dispute the need for medications, even formulary medications, leaving patients to pay out of pocket for their medicines until their case has been resolved.

We have built our reputation as a workers' compensation pharmacy with our patients and their attorneys and doctors by dispensing medications at our own risk by shouldering the cost of such medications during those times. Our patients know that they can rely on us if the insurance company refuses to pay for a medication to which they are rightfully entitled. These disputes can last for months or even years.

One of our patients is Darrin Moran. Darrin has been involved in the comp system for decades and needs essentially the same medications every month. He has had tremendous difficulty receiving his medications on a timely basis. Darrin has almost given up on trying to get many of his medications through the workers' compensation system. Over the years, we have worked with countless individuals like Darrin.

We have been doing our best to help Darrin for many years. We are owed money for medications dispensed to Darrin to treat his established sites of injury going back to 2014. We will continue to do our best for him, but the system right now is stacked in favor of the insurance carriers, and most especially stacked against injured workers like Darrin Moran.

There is a bill that would help tremendously with this issue, S1974 carried by Chair Ramos. It provides workers compensation claimants with greater flexibility by allowing them to fill their prescriptions not only at network pharmacies with whom an employer or insurance carrier has an exclusive relationship with but, when unreasonable difficulties arise for medications that should be authorized, injured workers will also have recourse to have their medications dispensed by pharmacies of their choice. This bill provides injured workers with recourse and access when they need help to treat their injuries. It would also benefit small businesses like ours in New York State. The bill has been passed several times in the New York State Senate and we look forward to continuing our work with you and with the Legislature this session to remedy this issue. Thank you and all the injured workers we work with in New York State also thank you for your support.