May 8, 2014

The Honorable Terry Branstad
1007 East Grand Ave.
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Governor Branstad:

On behalf of the Epilepsy Foundation and our Iowa affiliate, the Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa, & Nebraska, we urge you to sign HF 2463, which includes increased funding for epilepsy programs and the Home and Community Based Services waiver, as well as streamlines the prior authorization process, which would improve access to care and health outcomes for Iowa residents living with epilepsy and other chronic conditions.

The Epilepsy Foundation, through our local affiliate, the Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa, & Nebraska, represents the more than 27,000 Iowa residents living with epilepsy and seizures. The Epilepsy Foundation works to ensure that people with seizures are able to participate in all life experiences; and to prevent, control, and cure epilepsy through research, education, and direct services. Epilepsy funding supports training to first responders, medical professionals, and school personnel, as well as support and education programs for people living with epilepsy. A funding increase for epilepsy programs to $149,832, would allow the Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa, & Nebraska to expand their services in the eastern part of Iowa.

Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime. For the majority of people living with epilepsy, anti-epilepsy drugs (AEDs) are the most common and most cost effective treatment for controlling and/or reducing seizures.

There is no “one size fits all” treatment option for epilepsy, and the response to AEDs can be different for each person. Maintaining seizure control with minimal side effects requires careful evaluation and monitoring by the physician and patient. To change, limit, or deny access to medications could be extremely dangerous. Patients with epilepsy who experience a delay in accessing their medication, or have their medications switched, due to onerous prior authorization requirements, are at higher risk for developing breakthrough seizures and related complications. Restricting access to physician directed care also significantly increases medical costs related to preventable seizures, along with lost wages and productivity, not just for the individuals living with epilepsy but also their families and communities.

The House and Senate support the creation of a standardized prior authorization process, including a form that can be submitted electronically and a requirement that insurance companies respond to all prior authorization requests within 72 hours. These changes would
speed up and streamline the prior authorization process and allow Iowa residents to access the medication they need in a safe and timely manner. The Epilepsy Foundation opposes measures that unnecessarily prolong ineffective treatment and urges you to support the proposal to streamline the prior authorization process in Iowa.

Timely access to support services is just as critical for managing epilepsy. The Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver program allows older Iowans or those living with disabilities to receive services in their home and community. This program is especially important for individuals with uncontrolled or intractable epilepsy, who cannot drive and experience many transportation and mobility challenges. Funding the HCBS waiver waitlist at $7.45 million would open up these home and community services to thousands of Iowans, including those living with epilepsy.

The Epilepsy Foundation and our Iowa affiliate, the Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa, & Nebraska, urge you to sign HF 2463 and provide increased funding for epilepsy programs and the Home and Community Based Services waiver, as well as streamlining for the prior authorization process to improve access to care and health outcomes for Iowa residents living with epilepsy and other chronic conditions. Please do not hesitate to contact Angela Ostrom, Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy, at 301-918-3766 or aostrom@efa.org, with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Philip M. Gattone, M.Ed.  
President & CEO  
Epilepsy Foundation

Victor W. Verni  
Executive Director  
Epilepsy Foundation of North/Central Illinois, Iowa, & Nebraska