

Robert Buccieri
17 Adamson Ave
Norwalk, CT 06854

January 24, 2014

RE: Changes in United Healthcare

Senator Blumenthal
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Ave
Hartford, CT.

Dear Senator Blumenthal,

My name is Robert Buccieri and a lifelong resident of Connecticut. Born and raised in Norwalk. I am 55 years old and have stage five kidney disease or commonly known as End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD).

I was given the privilege to receive Social Security Disability in 2010 and researched United Healthcare Medicare Solutions initially because of its reputation. I studied their website and found my doctor, and my local hospitals were providers. The coverage, co-pays, and public opinion were all good, and so I chose United Healthcare. I've been very happy with my choice until this fall.

When diagnosed with ESRD my primary care physician Dr. Tao-Nan Chi referred me to Dr. Paul Wiener, a nephrologist. Together they saved my life. I have a great relationship with both of these doctors. With their help I am "on the list" for a kidney transplant at Yale –New Haven Hospital, one of the finest hospitals in this country. We are fortunate to have such a resource in our state. I am on the verge of going on dialysis and have visited The DaVita Center in Norwalk.

The kidneys not only filter blood, they keep your body's chemistry in check. I am on about a dozen different medications to maintain this balance. Several of these medications I take two and three times daily. Along the way I've gone thru many procedures, tests, and monthly blood-work at Yale for tissue typing. I had everything in order and patiently waiting for a kidney.

In the fall of 2013, United Healthcare turned my world upside down. I received a letter stating my nephrologist was not going to be a provider as of February 2014. Then a Yale transplant surgeon was removed. Then a second Yale transplant surgeon, and finally the Yale Medical Group in which they both belong were eliminated as well. I also found out my local dialysis unit was no longer going to participate.

I frantically called Carolyn Short, my nurse case manager at United Healthcare. She went out of her way to find solutions to my concerns. She called the dialysis unit on my behalf and found out I can use the center by switching to another local nephrologist – Dr. Kumar. Not perfect, but a solution. She also claimed that since I was pre-approved at Yale for transplant, they would honor that, but not for anything unrelated to the transplant. The fear of unrelated complications made me more nervous. I consider Carolyn to be a great nurse case manager and resource.

I knew Senator Blumenthal initiated an investigation with United Healthcare regarding provider issues, so I asked for some assistance. I figured this would be easy because Carolyn did the ground work. All I wanted was something in writing from United Healthcare verifying this. I received numerous phone calls from United Healthcare after the Senator and his office got involved. They (United Healthcare) were eager to help and find solutions, but not consistent. Nobody reinforced what I was told by my nurse case manager, and my window to choose another plan now closed. The uncertainty of this confirmation elevates my anxiety even more. This problem consumes me night and day.

I've received a confirmation letter from United Healthcare for a 90 day approval to see my nephrologist for 25 minutes and can request an approval for another 90 days, if need be. I'm not thrilled to deal with this problem every 90 days. Does this mean 25 minutes for each office visit, or 25 minutes in total? On more than one occasion Dr. Wiener has spent more than 25 minutes with me in a single visit. This only adds to my worries.

I was also told that my insurance plan would allow me get a transplant out of state. Maybe I could register in NYC for a transplant. I give them credit for their effort and for thinking outside the box. The problem is that I've been "on the list" at Yale for almost two years. If I register in NYC, I would once again be on the bottom of the list.

I believe United Healthcare is discriminating against high risk patients, like myself. Hoping they will choose another insurance carrier and making their company more profitable. Even if they concede and reinstate providers they still win, because a vast majority of individuals affected by this have already switched insurance carriers.

I appreciate all the help from United Healthcare in effort and creativity, and I know they are eager to help solve my issues, but they can do better. In addition to trying to survive another day with this disease, now I have to worry about provider issues. This isn't fair.

I hope Senator Blumenthal and his colleagues apply more pressure persuading United Healthcare to promptly resolve this.

Sincerely,

Robert Buccieri