



May 1, 2023

Dear Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and Members of the Insurance and Financial Services Committee:

On behalf of the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP)/ Be The Match, I am writing in support of LD 1577, which requires coverage of biomarker testing by health plans and MaineCare. Patients with blood cancers or disorders often need biomarker testing to determine targeted treatment or therapy for their disease.

**Biomarker testing** is the analysis of a patient's tissue, blood, or other biospecimen for the presence of a biomarker. Biomarker testing is an important step for accessing precision medicine, including targeted therapies that can lead to improved survivorship and better quality of life for patients. Additionally, many clinical trials require biomarker testing to identify eligible participants, which gives patients access to new and cutting-edge life-saving treatments.

Our top priority is getting patients who suffer from blood cancers and disorders and chronic disease the treatment they need. Biomarker testing is one tool physicians can use to determine the best treatment for their patients. **Ensuring access** to that testing increases the likelihood that a patient gets the right treatment at the right stage, as well as relieves the stress of possibly having to pay out of pocket for a test they need.

**LD 1577 will ensure that more Maine patients have access to biomarker testing.** Research shows that there are disparities in patients who are currently benefitting from biomarker testing – ethnically diverse, and those in rural communities are less likely to be tested. Improving access to biomarker testing is key for reducing disparities in cancer and chronic disease outcomes.

While the majority of the diseases we facilitate transplants for are blood cancers, biomarker testing is also critical to treating non-malignant chronic diseases such as Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and graft versus host disease (GvHD). SCD is a chronic disorder which causes the body to make unhealthy red blood cells, causing organ damage, and need for a bone marrow transplant as a life-saving treatment. GvHD is a debilitating and potentially deadly side effect of a bone marrow transplant, in which the donor immune cells attack the patient's healthy cells. It is critical that access to biomarker testing include both malignant cancer and chronic disease to provide determine best treatment and allow for enrollment in clinical trials.

**Insurance coverage for biomarker testing is necessary to increase the number of patients who have access to these tests, and to encourage providers to offer these tests to patients to determine the best course of treatment.** Patients directly benefit from receiving biomarker testing to determine the most targeted treatment for cancer or chronic disease. Genetic or multigene tests can determine the treatment or therapy with the best potential outcomes for the patient. Additionally, the provision requiring a prior authorization approval for urgent care, such as bone marrow transplant, within 24 hours will help to identify treatment options quickly with a biomarker test. Every hour counts in life-saving treatment.

**Expanding insurance coverage for cellular therapies, including biomarker testing, leads to improved outcomes for patients.** Results of a biomarker test can be used to match a patient with a targeted therapy that may be available as an FDA-approved treatment, an off-label treatment, or help patients qualify for participation in a clinical trial. Targeted therapies have the ability to block or turn off signals that cause cancer cells to grow and divide, prevent

the cells from living longer than normal, or destroy cancer cells, and their success depends on identifying a patient's specific biomarker profile.

LD 1577 aligns coverage of biomarker testing with the latest science, providing a gateway to targeted therapies that can lead to better health outcomes and improved quality of life. Greater access to biomarker testing can enable Maine patients to bypass costly and ineffective treatments by connecting patients with therapies that will be most effective for their individual disease right away.

Please support LD 1577 to increase access to biomarker testing for Mainers who could benefit.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Simaytis', with a stylized, cursive style.

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