



Tuesday, January 28, 2025

**Maine Joint Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
L.D. 107 (H.P. 72) – An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing (SUPPORT)**

Good afternoon, Chairs Bailey and Mathieson and members of the committee. My name is Zach Hardy, and I am a State Government Relations Manager for The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee on **L.D. 107 (H.B. 72)**, which would require health benefit plans, including Medicaid, to provide coverage for biomarker testing.

Founded in 2000, The Michael J. Fox Foundation has been singularly dedicated to finding a cure for Parkinson's disease through an aggressively funded research agenda and to ensuring the development of improved therapies for those living with Parkinson's today. To date, the Foundation has funded more than \$2 billion in research programs worldwide.

Biomarker testing is a crucial step for accessing precision medicine, including targeted therapies that can lead to improved survivorship and better quality of life for patients. While most current applications of biomarker testing are in oncology and autoimmune diseases, there is research underway to benefit patients in other areas, including neurological diseases such as Parkinson's.

In April 2023, the Foundation announced that through the ongoing work of our landmark clinical study, Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative (PPMI), a new biomarker had been identified for Parkinson's disease. This breakthrough was published in the scientific journal *The Lancet Neurology* and opens a new chapter for research, with the promise of a future where every person living with Parkinson's can expect improved care and treatments — and newly diagnosed individuals may never advance to full-blown symptoms.¹

The Foundation recognizes the importance of biomarker testing and how it will soon broadly benefit our community. There are estimated to be more than 1 million Americans currently living with Parkinson's disease, with about 90,000 more diagnosed each year.² According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Parkinson's disease is the second-most common and the fastest-growing neurological disorder worldwide.

In Maine, there are estimated to be more than 5,100 people currently living with Parkinson's, with direct and indirect costs to care for these individuals estimated to be \$257 million annually. We believe these statistics on prevalence and economic burden to be undercounts.

¹ "Breaking News: Parkinson's Disease Biomarker Found." The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research | Parkinson's Disease, 13 Apr. 2023, <https://www.michaeljfox.org/news/breaking-news-parkinsons-disease-biomarker-found>.

² "New Study Shows the Incidence of Parkinson's in the U.S. Is Nearly 50 Percent Higher than Previous Estimates." The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research | Parkinson's Disease, 15 Dec. 2022, <https://www.michaeljfox.org/news/new-study-shows-incidence-parkinsons-us-nearly-50-percent-higher-previous-estimates>.

Improving access to biomarker testing, and thereby access to targeted therapies, is a strategy to reduce health disparities and improve outcomes for patients. This legislation would ensure that health benefit plans and state Medicaid programs keep pace with innovations in testing, allowing patients to access this critically important health care tool when it is available and medically appropriate.

The Foundation strongly supports expanded access to biomarker testing, as it leads to better treatments and treatments for patients. On behalf of the Foundation and the community that we support, I urge members to support **L.D. 107 (H.B. 72)**.

CONTACT:

Zach Hardy

State Government Relations Manager

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research

zhardy@michaeljfox.org | 202-638-4101, Ext. 225