

Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Cross Building, Room 220

C/O Legislative Information Offices

100 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

January 24, 2025

RE: LD 107, Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing – SUPPORT

Chair Bailey, Chair Mathieson, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the more than 330 Mainers living with chronic kidney disease, I'm writing to you to ask for your support for LD 107. This important bill would ensure that patients facing chronic diseases, such as kidney disease, are able to access and afford biomarker testing when necessary. Research shows that there are disparities in who is currently benefitting from biomarker testing. People of color and those in rural communities are less likely to be tested. Improving access to biomarker testing is key to reducing disparities in cancer outcomes and other serious health conditions, including kidney disease.

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) is the nation's leading nonprofit organization working on behalf of the 1 in 7 Americans living with kidney disease, and the millions more at risk, with an unmatched scope of programs that support people wherever they are in their fight against kidney disease, from prevention through transplant. With programs that address early detection, disease management, financial assistance, clinical research, innovation and advocacy, no kidney organization impacts more lives than AKF.

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 cancer patients. Biomarker testing is increasingly important to cancer care, and for the treatment of other diseases including arthritis, other autoimmune conditions and rare diseases, including rare kidney diseases. Research into rare kidney disease is progressing rapidly, and precision medicine has the potential to keep many people from ever developing end stage renal disease (ESRD), also known as kidney failure.

While there are currently only two treatment options for those with ESRD (dialysis or kidney transplant), we are hopeful that other options may be available to patients in the future. As of now, neither dialysis nor transplant are inexpensive treatments, and both have a significant impact on a person's life and quality of life.

Unfortunately, kidney disease disproportionately affects people of color. One of AKF's top priorities is to advocate for health equity—and we believe that healthcare access and affordability are critical components. Without action to expand coverage of promising medical testing, such as biomarker testing, advances in precision medicine will likely lead to an increase in existing disparities in health outcomes. Every person deserves access to affordable biomarker testing.

LD 107 will increase access to biomarker testing – helping doctors to identify the right treatment at the right time. The bill 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. Biomarker testing could allow tens of thousands of patients to bypass costly and ineffective treatments by connecting patients with therapies that will be most effective for their individual disease.

Please support LD 107 to expand access to biomarker testing for all the citizens who could benefit.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jon Hoffman

Senior Director State Policy and Advocacy

American Kidney Fund