

January 28th, 2025

In support of LD 107 – An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing.

Good morning, Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson, and members of the Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee. My name is Mikala Bousquet, and I live in Topsham. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with 9 years of experience currently serving as an oncology social work navigator in the outpatient setting in the Midcoast region. I am also the State Lead Ambassador for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACSCAN). I write to you today to express my strong support to ensure every Mainer insured through a state-regulated health plan, including Medicaid, has access to proven comprehensive biomarker testing by supporting LD 107.

As a social worker for cancer patients, I have had the privilege of working closely with countless individuals and families affected by cancer in our communities. I bear witness to the physical, emotional, and financial toll cancer takes on those it touches every day. I have also seen the hope and resilience that can come from effective, personalized precision medicine. On a more personal note, I can thankfully state that biomarker testing helped my younger sister who is currently in active treatment for triple positive breast cancer at just 29 years old. The HER2 biomarker found in her cancer told her doctors that they needed to act swiftly, and she was started promptly on the HER2 targeted therapies to suppress the cancer growth. She still has a long road, but we are more confident that she is on the correct treatment regimen because she had access to this testing and I am so thankful for this science.

Timely access to guideline indicated biomarker testing helps achieve the trifecta of health care including better health outcomes, improved quality of life, and reduced health care costs. Biomarkers guide our doctor's treatment recommendations by providing information about whether a patient's specific cancer type and their own genes will respond to various treatment options or not. Nearly 60% of all cancer drugs approved in the last 5 years require or recommend biomarker testing before use (1). My role as an oncology social work navigator is to do my best to connect patients and families to resources of all kinds to improve their health outcomes and quality of life. Comprehensive biomarker testing can lead to treatments with fewer side effects, longer survival, and allow patients to avoid treatments that are likely to be ineffective or unnecessary. Exposure to ineffective treatments can exacerbate the already ever present physical, emotional, and financial burden of these diseases.

Despite evidence of its effectiveness, biomarker testing is not available or utilized by every Mainer who would benefit, and we must prioritize expanding access. Insurance coverage is failing to keep pace with innovations and advancements in treatments. My patients already facing a life altering

diagnosis should not also fear that their insurance will not cover testing that can give them the best information. Twenty other states have already recently enacted similar legislation with strong bipartisan support and similar legislation is pending in many others, including Massachusetts and Vermont.

In closing, I ask all of you to support this bipartisan legislation and ensure that more cancer patients in our state have access to this life changing science. The immense impact of personalized care is not only the right thing to do but promotes health equity, health access to our rural state, reduces health care costs, and most importantly improves the quality of lives of those affected by cancer in the State of Maine.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration,

Mikala Bousquet, MSW, LCSW

Topsham, Maine

ACSCAN Volunteer

Sources:

(1) Global Oncology Trends 2021. IQVIA Institute; June 2021.

Mikala Bousquet
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
LD 107

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