



May 8, 2023

My name is Deb Violette and I am in support of LD-1577 “An Act to Require Health Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing.”

Thank you Senator Bailey, Representative Perry, distinguished members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee for allowing me to speak today. I would also like to thank sponsors Representative Zager, Senator Bennett, Representative Arata, Cyrway, Javner, Perry, Swallow, and Bailey.

I am President and founder of Free ME from Lung Cancer, the only nonprofit based here in Maine dedicate solely to raising much needed money for research, early lung cancer screening and helping single family low income homeowners get access to radon air abatement systems. I am here today to testify in support of LD-1577.

I am not a professional lobbyist, although I have done my share of lobbying on issues near to me. I am a lung cancer patient/survivor. I was diagnosed with stage III disease in 1998. I visit my Boston oncologist who monitors my condition and are ready to treat the disease should it progress. 25 years ago biomarker testing was not something that was available to cancer patients.

Biomarker testing is a way to look for genes, proteins and other substances “called biomarkers or tumor markers” that can provide information about the tumor. Just as we are all unique so isn't our biomarkers. Some of these biomarkers affect how certain cancer treatments will work. It helps the patient and physician select a cancer treatment designed just for the patient. Some treatments including targeted therapies and immunotherapies may only work for people whose cancers have certain biomarkers. This is a game changer for patients because once their biomarkers have been identified a treatment plan can be developed that would best fit the patient. It can also provide evidence about the safety and efficacy of the chosen treatments.

Biomarker testing is an important part of precision medicine, also called personalized medicine. Precision medicine is an approach to medical care in which disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment are tailored to the genes, proteins and other substances in the patient's body. Biomarker testing can also help you find a study of a new cancer treatment “clinical trial” that the patient may be able to join. For some other clinical trails, biomarker testing is part of the study.

For example studies NCI-MATCH and NCI-COG Pediatric MATCH are using biomarker tests to match people to treatments based on the genetic change their cancer.

Biomarker testing results could also show that the patients cancer has a biomarker that may prevent a certain therapy from work. This information would spare the patient from getting a treatment that won't help the patient.

Above test taken directly from the National Cancer Institutes website at <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/types/biomarker-testing-cancer-treatment>

I am asking that you all support this important piece of legislation. It will increase the standard of patient care and ensure that the treatment plan chosen is the right treatment for the patient.

Deb Violette, President

Free ME from Lung Cancer