

Chairman Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and all members of the House Health Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify for HB 8 supporting insurance coverage of Biomarker Testing. My name is Kelly Chellis. I am from Columbus and I am the volunteer Ohio Advocacy Board Chair for the Arthritis Foundation. I am also a person living with arthritis and a parent of a child with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis for last 16 years. Arthritis is the number one disability in the United States and 25% of Ohio residents suffer from arthritis - that is 2.3 million people. 1 in 3 Ohio veterans suffers from arthritis. Many people think of arthritis as the "old people's" disease - but arthritis comes in over 100 different forms and can effect people of all ages.

Arthritis doesn't just present itself as achy joints. Getting a diagnosis and correct treatment of Juvenile Arthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis or Lupus among others isn't always easy or straight forward. That is where Biomarker testing comes in and is very important for diagnosis and treatment. From working with the JA community, I know that many children suffer for months even years before getting the correct diagnosis. Watching your child suffer and not know why is heart-wrenching as a parent. My kiddo was lucky that it was just a couple of weeks and a hospital stay yet we had 2 other diagnosis before landing on JIA and went through several medicines to find ones that work. The longer patients go without treatment, the more long term irreversible joint damage is done. Biomarker testing can help significantly lessen the time to find the correct diagnosis and the right treatment.

As you know insurance does not always want to pay for testing. This seems to me to be backwards thinking - why waste money seeing many specialists, running wrong tests, taking the wrong medicine or letting a patient suffer when biomarker testing can be used to get to a solution quicker and less painfully. At one point due to step therapy my kiddo had to fail on 2 other medication. We did not have the opportunity to get biomarker testing before trying a range of expensive Biologic medications and TNF inhibitors - biomarkers can help determine which of these medications will work best for the differing types of arthritis. I think about all the pain, swelling, doctor's appointments, missed school and missing out on fun activities that could have been prevented if we had access to biomarker testing years earlier. People living with arthritis want answers that allow them to live full, productive lives and biomarker testing has the ability to give them those answers.

Biomarker testing is one of many tools that can help patients and their doctors get to the root cause of symptoms for many diseases including arthritis. It should not matter where you live or what insurance you have whether or not you have access to testing. Bio Marker testing should be available to all Ohioans who need it. I ask for your support on HB8.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kelly Chellis