April 9, 2025

Chair Schmidt and Members of the Ohio House Health Committee

My name is Kelli Hykes, Director of Government Relations and Advocacy for Ohio Nurses Association and I am here today to support House Bill 8, which will ensure Ohioans covered by state regulated insurance plans, including Medicaid, have coverage for biomarker testing when medically appropriate. I speak on behalf of the 200,000 nurses and health professionals licensed in Ohio who care deeply about their patients' access to quality, affordable healthcare.

As nurses and healthcare professionals, we are dedicated to providing the best possible care for our patients. We advocate for treatments that save lives, improve quality of life, and reduce unnecessary suffering. Today, I stand before you to stress the timely need for mandated insurance coverage of biomarker testing—a revolutionary tool that personalizes medicine and leads to better patient outcomes.

Biomarker testing allows us to analyze a patient's genes, proteins, and other molecular characteristics to determine the most effective treatment for their specific condition. It is widely used in oncology, cardiology, and autoimmune diseases, and it has transformed the way we approach patient care. Yet, despite its proven benefits, many insurance companies still refuse to cover this essential testing, leaving patients with limited treatment options and skyrocketing costs.

We in the healthcare field witness firsthand the consequences of this lack of coverage. Without biomarker testing, many patients are subjected to a trial-and-error approach— wasting precious time on ineffective treatments that not only fail to work but also cause unnecessary side effects. For many patients, this can mean the difference between life and death. Targeted therapy, guided by biomarker testing is far more effective than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Further, biomarker testing can be an incredible help for people with mental health challenges. Research has shown that biomarkers can help identify the most effective psychiatric medications for individuals with depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. Currently, many mental health patients undergo months or even years of trial and error with medications that may not work for them, leading to unnecessary suffering, worsening symptoms, and increased hospitalizations. With biomarker testing,

we can move toward a more precise, personalized approach to mental health treatment, improving patient well-being while reducing the burden on the healthcare system.

Passing this bill is not just about improving care—it's about financial responsibility. Precision medicine saves healthcare dollars by avoiding ineffective treatments and reducing hospitalizations. A proactive approach to treatment through biomarker testing leads to better-managed chronic diseases, lower long-term healthcare costs, and improved patient survival rates. In the long run, insurers benefit as well, as they avoid paying for unnecessary or prolonged treatments. By requiring coverage for precision medicine, Ohio can reduce unnecessary expenditures in the healthcare system while improving patient outcomes.

Mandating insurance coverage for biomarker testing is also a matter of equity. No patient should be denied the best possible treatment due to financial barriers. A person's access to life-saving care should not depend on their insurance provider. If we truly believe in evidence-based medicine and patient-centered care, we must ensure that every individual has access to the tools that make personalized treatment a reality.

As nurses and healthcare professionals, we continually call on policymakers like yourselves, healthcare leaders, and insurance companies to prioritize what is best for patients. Nurses and healthcare professionals are going to continue advocating for our patients, but we need systemic changes to ensure that cutting-edge medicine is not reserved for the privileged few.

The science is clear. The benefits are undeniable. Now is the time to act. Please support SB 8.

Thank you.