

Written Testimony on the Importance of Biomarkers in Rheumatoid Arthritis Research
Submitted to The Ohio House of Representatives Health Committee

My name is Lacey Meeks, and I am writing to share my personal experience as someone living with seronegative rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and to strongly urge your support for increased access to biomarker testing and the advancement of related legislation that will improve outcomes for patients with arthritis.

I was officially diagnosed with seronegative rheumatoid arthritis in 2018, but that diagnosis came after several long, painful years of misdiagnosis, unanswered questions, and emotional and financial strain. I spent thousands of dollars out of pocket on medical claims, exploratory surgeries, and multiple rounds of try-and-fail medication attempts—often with little or no relief. Because I lacked the traditional markers typically used to diagnose RA, my condition remained elusive for far too long. This is the frustrating and often invisible reality for many individuals living with seronegative RA.

Ironically, my advocacy for arthritis began long before my own diagnosis. In 2006, I joined Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority, whose philanthropic mission is centered on juvenile arthritis. Since then, I have been a dedicated advocate for the Arthritis Foundation, even serving as the Adult Honoree for the 2019 Columbus Jingle Bell Run. I never imagined that this cause—one I championed for others—would become so deeply personal.

Living with seronegative RA affects my life every single day. From physical discomfort to the emotional toll of navigating a chronic, often misunderstood illness, the burden is significant. This is why I am passionate about the importance of biomarker research. Improved access to advanced diagnostic tools—like biomarker testing—has the potential to dramatically shorten the time to accurate diagnosis, reduce unnecessary procedures, and help patients find the right treatment sooner. For people like me, this could mean fewer years of suffering, fewer financial burdens, and a better quality of life.

I respectfully urge the committee to collaborate with the Arthritis Foundation and support legislation that will promote biomarker research, increase access to testing, and pave the way for more personalized, effective care for those living with arthritis. Your support can help transform the future for millions of Americans impacted by this disease.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to advancing the health and well-being of all arthritis patients.

Sincerely,
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