



March 28th, 2023

Chair Lampton, Vice Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Miranda, and members of the Ohio House Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony to House Bill 24, which would require health benefit plans and Medicaid program coverage of biomarker testing.

UC Medical Center (UCMC) serves as the only verified adult Level 1 Trauma Center for the Greater Cincinnati region, and our academic medical center proudly provides world-class care to all injured and critically ill patients in our community. Our tripartite mission to provide life-saving clinical care, generate innovative research, and educate the next generations of medical providers all underscore our goal to improve the comprehensive care of trauma patients in Cincinnati. We are innovators, relentless in our pursuit of the best in medicine and able to care for the most complex and critically ill patients. We hold the highest standard of patient care, clinical research and medical education.

Biomarker testing is used to provide additional information regarding an individual's type of cancer and create a personalized treatment plan that allows for greater success in the treatment of cancer. Although the morphology of a cancer might appear to be the same at the microscopic level, cancers can be quite different when analyzed with biomarker screening. Biomarker testing looks for mutations, additions, deletions, and rearrangements in DNA. Additionally, biomarker testing is able to analyze certain proteins or the amount of tumor DNA in a patient's blood. Each person's cancer has a unique pattern of biomarkers and these may impact how the patient favorably or unfavorably responds to certain cancer treatments. The future of oncology is based on developing drugs that target specific molecular mutations. The only way to utilize these new drugs is to identify the molecular signature of tumors, which can only be done currently through biomarker screening. Advances in science and technology have allowed for greater understanding of biomarkers in the treatment of cancer and have become a staple in the diagnosis, treatment, and monitoring of a patient.

As of now, biomarker testing faces significant hurdles for many patients due the lack of coverage from benefit plans and Medicaid. House Bill 24 will allow for biomarker testing to become a standard of care in the detection and treatment of cancer. While the field of precision medicine and biomarker testing have advanced rapidly over the last several years, coverage policies across health insurance plans have not kept pace with the speed of innovation. The variability and uncertainty of coverage by patients' health plans have become a barrier to the access of biomarker testing. These barriers also disproportionately impact minorities, under/uninsured, and result in widening socio-economic disparities in health outcomes.

On behalf of UC Health, we strongly support House Bill 24 and respectfully request the Ohio House Insurance Committee favorably report this legislation.

Sincerely,

Syed A. Ahmad, MD, FACS

Professor of Surgery

The Hayden Family Endowed Chair of Cancer Research

Co-Director University of Cincinnati Cancer Center

Chief Division Surgical Oncology

The University of Cincinnati College of Medicine