

House Insurance Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S High St
Columbus, OH 43215



May 8, 2024

OHC Supports HB 24: Require Health Plan and Medicaid Coverage of Biomarker Testing

Honorable Chairman Lampton, Vice-Chair Barhorst, Ranking Member Miranda, and Members of the House Insurance Committee,

On behalf of Oncology Hematology Care (OHC) we would like to request your support and approval of HB 24, which would require medically necessary health plan coverage for biomarker testing. Passage of this legislation would remove barriers of access to clinical services that have been proven to enhance outcomes and provide high quality cancer care for Ohio cancer patients enrolled in Medicaid and state regulated commercial health plans.

Oncology Hematology Care, or OHC as we call it, is an independent, physician-led practice that delivers leading-edge technology and treatment options to cancer patients in the greater Cincinnati area. As one of the largest independent adult cancer practices in the nation, we have provided accessible and affordable cancer care to patients of all economic backgrounds in our community for nearly 40 years. OHC is our region's premier source of treatment for nearly every form of adult cancer and complex blood disorder.

At OHC, our core value is to ensure that our patients receive the right care at the right time and in the right place. In our lengthy experience, when this goal is achieved, patient outcomes improve, quality of care is preserved, and unnecessary care costs are avoided. Aligned with this passion, we support coverage for biomarker testing across all payers as it removes financial barriers to accessing targeted therapies that will provide the best outcomes for all Ohio cancer patients.

At OHC our clinicians commonly prescribe targeted therapies, also known as precision medicines, which work by stopping or slowing the growth or spread of cancer by "targeting" specific molecules, often in the form of proteins. Cancer cells need these proteins, generated by mutated genes, to survive, multiply, and spread. To identify which of these targeted therapies will work best for our patients we are commonly requesting broad based biomarker testing panels to look for any gene mutations that can indicate which treatment plans can provide the most beneficial outcomes overall.

Without the coverage offered in HB 24, state health plans may not cover biomarker testing at all or might only cover very narrow biomarker testing panels that leave out important biomarkers for molecular tumor profiling. Availability of broad, potentially repeatable biomarker testing panels that factor in a patient's genomic and cellular profile means that truly customized treatments are closer than ever before. As more and more of these targeted therapies are being developed, there has also arisen a companion demand for continued access to associated biomarker testing. As the pipeline of treatment development shifts towards personalized medicine, it will become increasingly difficult to provide high quality care to patients who do not have access to the necessary testing coverage through their health plans.

A truly excellent example of a disease that has been reshaped by the advent of biomarker testing is advanced stage non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). Aside from identifying diagnostic markers for the disease, broader next generation sequencing biomarker testing panels have enabled oncologists to identify relevant co-occurring

mutations, resistance mechanisms involved in disease progression, and primary aberrations to target.¹ Having this knowledge in hand enables the patient's physician to select the most effective first line treatment that was precisely formulated to target their specific disease. The result? A four-fold increase in lung cancer survivorship since we began incorporating biomarker testing into standard of care.

Beyond lung cancer, the potential impact for new and emerging trends in next generation sequencing and biomarker testing is staggering. Already oncologists rely on the ability to identify specific mutations for certain types of malignancies in order to accurately construct a treatment plan that will result in the best possible patient outcomes. They also rely on the ability to continuously re-order these tests in order to maintain assurance that the treatment plan remains appropriate should the patient's disease progress.

The impact on patients is also significant. Because you are not using chemotherapy, the patient's quality of life is improved, and their ability to do their activities of daily living is improved and many can continue working.

If you have any further questions regarding the importance of access to biomarker testing in oncology, please do not hesitate to reach out. We welcome the opportunity to be a further resource for you. Thank you for your time and we hope that you will consider joining us in our support for this measure.

Sincerely,

Randy Drosick, MD
Practice President
Oncology Hematology Care (OHC)

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10928270/>