



March 7, 2023

House Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 1217 - Support

Dear Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

On behalf of the International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis (AiArthritis), I encourage you to vote yes on HB 1217 bill number when it is before you in committee.

We are leaders in advancing education, advocacy, and research for those impacted by autoimmune and autoinflammatory arthritis (AiArthritis) diseases through peer-led guidance, collaboration, and resources that are driven by patient-identified issues and patient-infused solutions. As we are led by patients we understand the importance of early, appropriate treatment.

HB 1217 will require that select health plans and insurers cover biomarker testing that is supported by medical and scientific evidence. **Biomarker testing connects patients with the most effective treatments.**

Precision medicine uses biomarker testing to gather information about a person's own body to prevent, diagnose, or treat disease. The information gleaned from biomarker testing can help determine the treatment that will work the best for the specific patient, and can also allow patients to avoid treatments that are unlikely to be effective. **While biomarker testing originated in cancer care, it is rapidly increasing in usage for other conditions such as autoimmune disease.**

Using the traditional method of trial and error, identifying an effective treatment for a particular patient can take months – even years. In chronic, degenerative diseases like Rheumatoid Arthritis, for example, any length of time spent trying (and failing) ineffective treatments allows for the disease to progress, causing potentially irreversible damage to joints, tissues, and organs. Matter-of-fact, 70% of patients with any AiArthritis Disease will develop comorbidities due to uncontrolled inflammation. **This not only causes pain and suffering for the patient, but increases health care consumption and costs for both the person affected and the health system as a whole.**

We urge you to help ensure patients have access to early, appropriate treatment with your support of HB 1217.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Viscarra  
Public Policy Manager  
International Foundation for Autoimmune & Autoinflammatory Arthritis