



March 14, 2023

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Finance:

We are writing to ask for your support for SB 805 which would provide coverage for biomarker testing for Maryland National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) operates the federally authorized bone marrow program that matches living unrelated adult donors with patients in need of a life-saving transplant. Our top priority is getting our patients, who suffer from blood cancers and disorders and chronic disease, the treatment they need. Biomarker testing is one tool physicians can use to determine the best treatment for their patients. Ensuring access to that testing increases the likelihood that a patient gets the right treatment at the right stage, as well as relieves the stress of possibly having to pay out of pocket for a test they need.

SB 805 will ensure that more Maryland patients have access to biomarker testing. Research shows that there are disparities in patients who are currently benefitting from biomarker testing – people of color, and those in rural communities are less likely to be tested. Improving access to biomarker testing is key for reducing disparities in cancer and chronic disease outcomes.

Biomarker testing is the analysis of a patient's tissue, blood, or other biospecimen for the presence of a biomarker. Biomarker testing is an important step for accessing precision medicine, including targeted therapies that can lead to improved survivorship and better quality of life for patients. Additionally, many clinical trials require biomarker testing to identify eligible participants, which gives patients access to new and cutting-edge life-saving treatments.

While the majority of the diseases we facilitate transplants for are blood cancers, biomarker testing is also critical to treating non-malignant chronic diseases such as Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and graft versus host disease (GvHD). SCD is a chronic disorder which causes the body to make unhealthy red blood cells, causing organ damage, and need for a bone marrow transplant as a life-saving treatment. GvHD is a debilitating and potentially deadly side effect of a bone marrow transplant, in which the donor immune cells attack the patient's healthy cells. It is critical that access to biomarker testing include both malignant cancer and chronic disease to provide determine best treatment and allow for enrollment in clinical trials.

SB 805, aligns coverage of biomarker testing with the latest science, providing a gateway to targeted therapies that can lead to better health outcomes and improved quality of life. Greater access to biomarker testing can allow SB 805 to bypass costly and ineffective treatments by connecting patients with therapies that will be most effective for their individual disease right away. Please support SB 805 to increase access to biomarker testing for Maryland who could benefit.

Sincerely,

*Jocelyn Thompson*

Jocelyn Thompson

Advocacy Specialists

National Marrow Donor Program/ Be The Match