



Facing Hereditary Cancer EMPOWERED

February 16, 2023

RE: HB 155 – The Genetic Testing Protection Act of 2023

Position: SUPPORT

Hi, my name is Lisa Peabody, and I am a constituent and the Advocacy Manager for FORCE.

FORCE is a national nonprofit that advocates for people and Marylanders facing hereditary cancers. Most of our constituents carry an inherited genetic mutation that increases their cancer risk.

Knowing that you have an inherited genetic mutation puts you in the driver's seat to proactively affect and possibly decrease your cancer risk for some cancers. This high-risk group can follow medical guidelines to increase the frequency of screenings, start screenings at younger ages and possibly make the decision to undergo risk-reducing surgery. **Increased screenings and preventive measures, actually make members of this community the best candidates for insurance coverage.**

Tragically, some people refuse genetic testing, getting out of the driver's seat with their cancer risk, fearing that identifying a genetic mutation will impact their ability to get insurance. This doesn't mean they don't have a genetic mutation or that their cancer risk is decreased, it only means they are choosing to be uninformed due to the insurance consequences.

Take Lynch Syndrome, a group of inherited mutations, that causes up to 60% risk of colon cancer. Affecting 1 in 300 people, somebody in this room might even have Lynch. But, Lynch Syndrome carriers can mitigate their risk of colon cancer through increased screening and the removal of suspicious polyps. It's vital to know whether or not you have Lynch Syndrome. **We can't allow fear of the inability to get insurance to prevent people from getting genetic testing.**

An estimated 10% of Americans carry an inherited mutation that increases their cancer risk. **Awareness and evidence-based interventions empower members of our community to be proactive with their health, and reduce their risk, making them strong candidates for insurance.** Maryland should prohibit insurers from considering genetic information in their coverage decisions and endorse HB155.