

Memorandum In Support of SB 476 – Senator Beidle

Senate Finance Committee

February 12, 2025

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network is the nonprofit nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. ACS CAN empowers cancer patients, survivors, their families and other experts on the disease, amplifying their voices and public policy matters that are relevant to the cancer community at all levels of government. We support evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. On behalf of our constituents, many of whom have been personally affected by cancer, we stand in strong support of SB 476.

In the past two decades, our understanding of human genes and of the genetic basis of disease has grown dramatically. Many, if not most, diseases have their roots in our genes. Genes - through the proteins they encode - determine how efficiently we process foods, how effectively we detoxify poisons, and how vigorously we respond to infections.

The identification of disease-related genes has led to an increase in the number of available genetic tests that detect disease or an individual's risk of disease. Gene tests are available for many disorders, including Tay-Sachs disease and cystic fibrosis. Tests are also available to detect predispositions to Alzheimer's disease, colon cancer, breast cancer, and other conditions.

As the number of available genetic tests increases, the use and interpretation of those tests and the information they generate will require a basic understanding of how genetic principles apply to different health problems such as cancer. Results from these tests can lead to profound, life-changing decisions, such as whether to undergo prophylactic mastectomy, get more frequent cancer screenings, or take a particular drug or dosage of a drug.

SB 476 would require insurers, nonprofit health service plans and HMOs to provide coverage for genetic testing for individuals who may have an increased risk of developing cancer. In addition, it would prohibit them from imposing a copayment, coinsurance or deductible requirement on the coverage. This would be contingent on the genetic testing being recommended by a health care professional and consistent with evidence-based, clinical practice guidelines.

SB 476 furthers the acknowledgement and development of precision, personalized medicine. ACS CAN thanks the Chair and committee for the opportunity to testify and urges a favorable report of SB 476.