

HB 1187
Favorable
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To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to thank Delegate Nkongolo and the other Delegates for sponsoring this bill. My name is Rossalynn Abbott Ripper. I'm an Annapolis resident, a mother, a business executive, and a current chemo patient, having been recently diagnosed with stage one her2+/ER+/PR- breast cancer. I'm writing in favor of Maryland HB1187. Receiving a breast cancer diagnosis is a life altering event. No one can ever be prepared to hear such news. I live a healthy lifestyle. I exercise 5-6 times a week at Park Fitness in Severna Park, MD, I eat clean foods, I don't drink, I have never done drugs, there is no genetic history linked to breast cancer in my family as I've completed the genetic tests. Yet here I am. Upon receiving my mammogram in October 2024, I was called back for a biopsy. That biopsy resulted in a diagnosis of stage zero breast cancer, meaning I had abnormal cells, they were not yet fully cancerous, and had not yet spread. I made the difficult decision to have a double mastectomy to reduce my risk of those abnormal cells turning into full blown breast cancer. Once my double mastectomy was completed in January 2025, and the pathology was run on my breast tissue, an 8 mm her2+ tumor was discovered. Her2+ breast cancer is very aggressive and fast growing. I was immediately recommended for chemotherapy. Upon discussions with my oncologist, I was told I needed 12 weeks of Paxitol chemo, followed by a year of Herceptin, a targeted therapy. The first thing I thought of was "Oh my god, I'm going to lose my hair!" The grief at that realization set in. I had already been through so much and knowing my long treatment journey ahead was discouraging. I am strong. Mentally and physically. I can tolerate a great deal as it relates to my cancer. But losing my hair?! Despite my chemo being considered "low dose", hair loss is one of the main side effects. I came to learn about "cold capping" and how for my chemo regimen, I may have a chance at saving my hair. I received more information from the Anne Arundel Medical Center where I am receiving treatment. I learned that they use the Paxman System and that I would be a great candidate for cold capping. What I wasn't prepared for was the out-of-pocket expense. Cold capping is not covered by my insurance as it's deemed "cosmetic". How can this be? Every woman, going through breast cancer deserves the opportunity and dignity to keep her hair during chemo when possible. I am fortunate that I was able to pay the \$2,400 to cold cap. There are many other women who cannot afford to do so and lose their hair. For them it is utterly devastating. I see this every day in the breast cancer support groups I'm involved with. Cancer patients go through so much physically, mentally, including financially. Keeping your hair should not be a financial choice. It should be standard and treated similarly to the entire chemotherapy process. I recognize that cold capping will not work for some chemo regimes. But for those that it has a greater chance of success, it should be offered as a choice with insurance companies assisting in the cost. I respectfully ask the State of Maryland to do everything possible to require insurance companies to offer and pay their portion of cold capping. If I'm allowed to testify in person, I would like to show my cold cap for all to see. It really is amazing technology, and I am so grateful that it is helping to preserve my hair while undergoing chemo. My thoughts are with all those Marylanders dealing with a cancer diagnosis. Thank you for your time.