

Feb. 20, 2025

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the committee:

My name is Shayla Harris and I work for the American Kidney Fund. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about this important issue. On behalf of all the people we serve in Maryland, including more than 18,000 residents currently living with end-stage renal disease, also known as kidney failure, we respectfully request your support for House Bill 1007. This important bill would ensure that patients facing chronic diseases, such as kidney disease, do not face discrimination or increased rates in life, long-term care or disability insurance solely due to receiving genetic testing.

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) is the nation's leading nonprofit organization working on behalf of the 1 in 7 Americans living with kidney disease, and the millions more at risk, with an unmatched scope of programs that support people wherever they are in their fight against kidney disease, from prevention through transplant. With programs that address early detection, disease management, financial assistance, clinical research, innovation and advocacy, no kidney organization impacts more lives than AKF. We are also one of the nation's top-rated nonprofits, investing 97 cents of every donated dollar in programs, and we have received the highest 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator for 24 consecutive years, as well as the Platinum Seal of Transparency from Candid, formerly known as Guidestar.

One of the American Kidney Fund's top priorities is to advocate for reducing health disparities—and we believe that health care access and affordability are critical components. Without action to expand coverage of promising services like biomarker testing, advances in precision medicine will likely lead to an increase in existing disparities in health outcomes. We encourage individuals with risk factors to pursue genetic testing to help make decisions around preventative care and to manage kidney disease before it becomes kidney failure. People with or at risk of developing kidney disease should not be treated differently, discriminated against, or delayed in receiving a genetic test because they fear insurers will deny coverage or increase rates due to their genetics.

We believe that biomarker testing will ensure that all patients—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status or zip code—will benefit from better care. We should encourage this proactive choice and legally protect everyone who chooses to seek more information on their health and potential future. This, we submit to you today, is simply good public policy, which is why we respectfully request your support for HB 1007.