Written Testimony Supporting SB0476

Submitted to the Senate Finance Committee

February 18, 2025

Senator Pamela Beidle, Senator Antonio Hayes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB0476, which eliminates the patient out-of-pocket costs for multi-gene panel testing for inherited gene mutations and evidence-based screenings. My name is Deborah Renee Coleman, and I am a resident of Montgomery County Maryland.

As a two-time cancer survivor, it is essential that I lend my voice in support of this lifesaving legislation. My divine mandate is to help others, so they prayerfully never receive a cancer diagnosis, or to ensure they have access to the best care if they do.

I was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer in 2012 at the age of 37. In 2020, I was diagnosed with a rare gastrointestinal cancer at the age of 45.

By way of background, my maternal grandmother Cynthia Tate was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was in her forties. By the grace of God, she survived her bout with breast cancer and lived cancer-free until just shy of her ninety-fifth birthday. Her daughter, my maternal aunt Lorraine Bragg-Tate was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, which took her life at the age of 57. My paternal grandfather Theodore Roosevelt Coleman was diagnosed with colon cancer when he was in his eighties. Thankfully, he did not succumb to cancer.

I do not have a complete family history, but I am aware of three other paternal relatives who were diagnosed with cancer. All these third-degree relatives are cousins. One cousin was diagnosed with stage four cancer as a young woman. The other two cousins are sisters, both of whom were diagnosed with breast cancer in their later years. The elder of the two sisters recently completed treatment. Thankfully, all three of my cousins are survivors.

I do not know whether my relatives had access to genetic testing. Fortunately, I did. I received genetic testing after my breast cancer diagnosis in 2012 and again in 2014, 2016, and 2021. The genetic tests in 2012 and 2014 looked for mutations in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 breast cancer genes. No mutation was detected in either instance. The genetic tests in 2016 and 2021 looked for mutations in multiple genes. The test in 2021 evaluated 84 genes. All my genetic test results were considered negative. However, the additional findings for the genetic tests in 2016 and 2021 were interpreted as variants of uncertain significance (VUS), meaning there was **insufficient data at the time to determine if the variants in the specific genes analyzed caused an increased cancer risk.** Please note the following excerpts from these results:

2012

The classification and interpretation of all variants identified in this assay ***reflects the current state of scientific understanding*** *at the time this report was issued. In some instances,* ***the classification and interpretation of such variants may change as new scientific information becomes available.***

2021

This test did not identify any pathogenic variants, but includes at least one result that is not completely understood at this time. Please note that ***the classification of variants may change over time as a result of new variant interpretation guidelines and/or new information.***

I do not know how many of you have been directly or indirectly impacted by cancer. We can all agree that, when faced with this life-or-death scenario, you want access to all available resources. Regardless of the results, genetic testing represents exactly that namely, access to potentially lifesaving information.

My genetic testing was critical in providing me with vital information about my genetic makeup. It also provided peace of mind knowing that I did not carry any genetic mutations, despite my family history. I did not have to change my medical care and for that, I am grateful. I know others who were not as fortunate.

For anyone with a personal or family history of cancer, genetic testing is critical in determining whether they carry any gene mutations and can help them take the appropriate steps to manage their future health. This bill will ensure that genetic testing is available to all Marylanders, as medically necessary.

Genetic testing is a way for patients to have access to their genetic makeup and not only take healthcare into their own hands, but also ensure they have the best options available to manage their medical care.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support SB0476 and vote to pass this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.