

March 17, 2023

Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

Biomarker testing is used both to help make the correct cancer diagnosis and identify characteristics of the cancer that enable us to put each individual patient on the best treatment available for their disease. This improves treatment effectiveness, avoids unnecessary treatments, and reduces risks for potential adverse drug reactions.

My job for the past 10 years has been to develop biomarker tests for cancer and other medical applications, including pharmacogenomic biomarker tests for cancer, psychiatric, and other care scenarios.

When I began medical school in 2001, only a few biomarker tests had clear clinical utility. Since then, the clinical science has exploded, increasing the number of known biomarkers dramatically. Nearly every solid tumor has multiple biomarkers that should be tested routinely; this testing is evidence-based and standard of clinical care for oncology. The clinical utility of biomarkers is rapidly expanding in other disease states as well, including the well-established clinical benefits of pharmacogenomic biomarkers.

Despite this, some insurers still label biomarker testing investigational, creating barriers to test coverage and preventing patient access to care.

At M Health Fairview, I help lead our Quality Assurance committee to standardize oncology biomarker testing, so no matter where a patient is seen, providers follow clinical guidelines to ensure patients are getting connected to the right treatment at the right time as quickly as possible. This bill will help streamline the biomarker testing process; our patients and providers won't need to worry about insurance coverage for biomarker testing, which is a current barrier.

When treating a disease like cancer, precision matters, and biomarker testing is an important tool that patients must be able to access.

These personalized treatments are both the present and the future of health care – not just for cancer, but for other conditions as well. Let's make sure everyone can benefit. Please support this legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Andrew Nelson, MD, PhD  
co-director, Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory, M Health Fairview University of Minnesota  
Medical Center