

Senate Bill 912 (Limón): Biomarker Testing

Summary:

SB 912 (Limón) will increase access to biomarker testing, ensuring patients receive the right treatment at the right time.

Background:

Precision medicine is dramatically improving cancer outcomes by using information about a person's own genes or proteins (biomarkers) to prevent, diagnose, or treat disease.ⁱ When used in the treatment of cancer, precision medicine incorporates specific information about a person's cancer to inform diagnosis, prognosis, therapy selection, and to monitor how well therapy is working.

Advances in biomarker testing and cancer treatments now allow for targeted cancer therapies that can improve patient survival and quality of life. Testing patients for specific biomarkers is integral to precision medicine in cancer care, but despite evidence pointing to the benefits, testing rates lag behind clinical guideline recommendations. Research shows that there are socioeconomic inequalities in biomarker testing and targeted therapy utilization across cancer types. For example:

- In metastatic non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), eligible Black patients are less likely to receive biomarker testing compared to White patients.
- Patients with advanced NSCLC who were Black, older, or Medicaid-insured had lower odds of next-generation sequencing biomarker testing compared to patients who were White, younger, or commercially insured, respectively.
- Patients who are older, Black, uninsured, or Medicaid-insured are less likely to be tested for certain guideline indicated biomarkers for colorectal cancer.

In a 2021 survey, 66% of oncology providers reported that insurance coverage for biomarker testing is a barrier to biomarker testing.ⁱⁱ

What will SB 912 do?

Health care coverage for biomarker testing is failing to keep pace with scientific advancements. Senate Bill 912 will require state-regulated plans, including Medi-Cal, to cover comprehensive biomarker testing when supported by medical and scientific evidence, including nationally recognized clinical practice guidelines.

Timely access to appropriate biomarker testing will result in better health outcomes, advance health equity and reduce costs by connecting all patients to the most effective treatments.

ACS CAN Position: Support. For more information regarding this position, please contact ACS CAN California's Director of State Legislation at Ogden at 916.504.2475 or Autumn.Ogden@cancer.org.

ⁱ NCI Dictionary of Cancer Terms. <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/precision-medicine>. Accessed September 7, 2020.

ⁱⁱ ACS CAN. "Survey Findings Summary: Understanding Provider Utilization of Cancer Biomarker Testing Across Cancers." December 2021. https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/national_documents/provider_utilization_of_biomarker_testing_polling_memo_dec_2021.pdf