



March 21, 2024

Hawai'i State Legislature
Senate Committee
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 159; Requesting the Auditor to Assess the Social and Financial Effects of Mandatory Health Insurance Coverage for Biomarker Testing

Dear Senate Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Aimed Alliance, a not-for-profit health policy organization that seeks to protect and enhance the rights of health care consumers and providers, to express our support for Senate Concurrent Resolution 159, requesting the auditor to assess the social and financial effects of mandatory health insurance coverage for biomarker testing. The passage of this resolution, alongside House Concurrent Resolution 53, is essential to pave the way for House Bill No. 2223. This bill carries significant potential in advancing medical diagnostics and personalized treatment options for individuals facing various health challenges through the coverage of biomarker testing.

Biomarker testing is a crucial mechanism for gathering individualized information essential for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases.¹ This personalized data is derived by analyzing biological specimens, such as tissue and blood from patients, to detect key biomarkers such as genetic anomalies and molecular indicators.² Expanding insurance coverage for biomarker testing is a pivotal step toward enhancing accessibility to this indispensable diagnostic tool. The identification of specific biomarkers empowers practitioners to tailor treatments to individual patients, minimizing unnecessary interventions and maximizing therapeutic benefits.³

While significant strides in biomarker testing have been made in areas like oncology, its potential extends far beyond cancer diagnosis and treatment. There is a rapidly growing body of evidence highlighting its clinical benefits across a diverse spectrum of diseases and chronic illnesses, including conditions such as preeclampsia,⁴ cardiovascular diseases,⁵ diabetes,⁶

¹ Ali Bodaghi et al., *Biomarkers: Promising and valuable tools towards diagnosis, prognosis and treatment of Covid-19 and other diseases*, 9 Helyion e13323 (2023).

² Biomarker Testing, *Oncology Nursing Society*, <https://www.ons.org/genomics-taxonomy/biomarker-testing>.

³ Biomarker Tests and Cancer Treatment, *American Cancer Society*, <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/tests/biomarker-tests.html>.

⁴ Thermo Fisher, *Scientific Announces FDA Clearance of Breakthrough Immunoassays to Aid in the Risk Assessment of Preeclampsia*, Businesswire (2023), <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230519005071/en/Thermo-Fisher-Scientific-Announces-FDA-Clearance-of-Breakthrough-Immunoassays-to-Aid-in-the-Risk-Assessment-of-Preeclampsia>.

⁵ Crystal Ghantous et al., *Advances in Cardiovascular Biomarker Discovery*, 8 Biomedicines 552 (2020), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7759775/>

⁶ Brenda Dorcely et al., *Novel biomarkers for prediabetes, diabetes, and associated complications*, *Diabetes, 10 Metabolic Syndrome and Obesity* 345–61 (2017), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5565252/>



neurodegenerative disorders,⁷ and autoimmune diseases.⁸ For instance, the FDA recently approved a biomarker test for preeclampsia earlier this year, enabling health care professionals to identify pregnant individuals at the highest risk of preeclampsia, leading to better management of this condition and improved outcomes for both mothers and their newborns.⁹

These innovative applications of biomarker testing can contribute to improved patient outcomes, reduced healthcare costs, and enhanced quality of life.¹⁰ Spanning across a wide spectrum of medical conditions, biomarker testing offers significant contributions to disease prevention, early detection, and precision treatment strategies. We support the disease-agnostic language in House Bill No. 2223, recognizing its role in fostering a comprehensive approach to biomarker testing. This inclusive approach promotes innovation and progress across various medical specialties, ensuring that advancements benefit individuals across diverse healthcare needs.

In conclusion, we urge your support for the passage of S.C.R.159, which calls for an evaluation by the auditor to assess the social and financial impacts of mandating health insurance coverage for biomarker testing. This crucial step will clear the path for the enactment of House Bill No. 2223, thereby enhancing health outcomes for the residents of Hawai'i and ensuring that our health care system remains at the forefront of technological advancements.

Sincerely,

Ashira Vantrees
Counsel

⁷ *Blood Biomarkers in Neurodegenerative Diseases: Implications for the Clinical Neurologist*, 101 *Neurology* (2023), <https://n.neurology.org/content/101/4/172#:~:text=The%20most%20rigorously%20studied%20blood,detect%20AD%20in%20older%20adults>.

⁸ Fenghe Zhang et al., *Biomarkers in autoimmune diseases of the central nervous system*, 114 *Frontiers in Immunology* (2023), <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fimmu.2023.1111719/full#:~:text=They%20are%20easy%20to%20quantify,of%20disability%20in%20clinical%20practice>.

⁹ Thermo Fisher, *Scientific Announces FDA Clearance of Breakthrough Immunoassays to Aid in the Risk Assessment of Preeclampsia*, *Businesswire*.

¹⁰ *Biomarker Testing and Cost Savings*, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (Jan. 25, 2023), <https://www.fightcancer.org/news/biomarker-testing-and-cost-savings-1#:~:text=Timely%20access%20to%20guideline%2Dindicated,biomarkers%20based%20on%20clinical%20guidelines>.