

# Biomarker Testing

## Stories Behind the Statistics



Real Californians whose lives were changed because they had access to comprehensive biomarker testing and precision medicine to treat cancer.

“ When I was diagnosed with **stage IV esophageal cancer**, I immediately sought genomic and biomarker testing because, as a med school professor, I knew that could alert me to targetable mutations and potential targeted therapy. After 4 months on a drug targeted to my tumor, **the cancer was no longer detectable.** ”



**Pete Cala**  
Davis, CA



**Valerie Geller**  
Mission Viejo, CA

“ Thanks to biomarker testing, **my care team was able to identify an oral chemotherapy treatment that was best suited for my late-stage ovarian cancer.** Biomarker testing did so much more for me besides identifying that treatment. **It gave me time** – time to see and support my sons as they finished high school and transitioned to college, and time to share my love and knowledge of music by conducting a community-based orchestra of musicians ranging in age from elementary school to octogenarians. ”

“ When my mom was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer, she was facing a grueling regimen of conventional chemotherapy. However, her doctor recommended biomarker testing to see if she had an EGFR mutation which is common among Asian women. **The testing confirmed she did have the mutation which enabled her to take treatment targeted to her cancer.** The treatment had relatively few side effects and gave my family and me an extra year with her. ”



**Nathan Kang**  
Torrance, CA



“ As a cancer caregiver for my husband who suffers from AL amyloidosis, a rare disorder associated with blood cancers, he had the good fortune of benefiting from biomarker testing early on in his diagnosis. **He is now on a targeted protein inhibitor and his blood labs showed improvement after only two months of treatment.** ”

**Tina Tankka**  
Lafayette, CA



**Jim Murphy**  
San Jose, CA

“ As a three-time cancer patient and survivor, I am here today because I had early diagnostic testing and access to NCI Centers. Cost barriers to innovative testing prevent cancer patients from getting the best and fastest treatment for their individual cancers and a better chance at defeating their dreadful disease. My recurrence of prostate cancer after 11 years was a surprise, **but I benefited immediately from new biomarker diagnostic tests**, which informed my doctors of the type and intensity of treatment my cancer required. **Today, my prognosis is very good.** Everyone should have access to needed biomarker testing. ”

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**In a 2021 survey, 66% of oncology providers reported that insurance coverage for biomarker testing is a barrier to biomarker testing.**<sup>1</sup> A peer-reviewed study in *Personalized Medicine* found that 35% of Californians are covered by insurance policies that are more restrictive than National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines for biomarker testing of breast cancer, non-small cell lung cancer, melanoma and/or prostate cancer.<sup>2</sup>

**Senate Bill 912 (Limón)** will require state-regulated insurance plans, including Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans, to cover comprehensive biomarker testing when supported by medical and scientific evidence, including nationally recognized clinical practice guidelines. Timely access to appropriate biomarker testing can lead to better health outcomes, reduced health inequities and reduced costs by connecting patients with the most effective treatments for their individual condition. **This bill passed the Senate Health, Senate Appropriations and full Senate with unanimous support.**

**For questions or more information please contact:**

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<sup>1</sup> 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](https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/national_documents/provider_utilization_of_biomarker_testing_polling_memo_dec_2021.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> William B Wong, Daniele Anina, Chia-Wei Lin & Devon V Adams. Alignment of health plan coverage policies for somatic multigene panel testing with clinical guidelines in select solid tumors. *Personalized Medicine*. January 2022. <https://www.futuremedicine.com/doi/epub/10.2217/pme-2021-0174>