

In 2024, New Yorkers Will Get Better Access to Biomarker Testing and Precision Medicine

Governor Hochul signed a bipartisan bill to ensure access to biomarker testing and the right treatment for cancer and other illnesses.

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On December 22, New York Governor Kathy Hochul signed Senate Bill 1196a / Assembly Bill 1673a into law, securing a major win for patients across New York. The new law will require all state-regulated health plans, including Medicaid, to cover comprehensive biomarker testing, which will enable more New Yorkers to access precision medicine treatments that can lead to fewer side effects, improved survival, better quality of life and potentially lower costs for patients facing cancer and other serious illnesses.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) “is proud to see New York, a longstanding leader in health equity and medical innovation, join 13 other states that have recently enacted similar legislation,” said Lisa Lacasse, president of ACS CAN. “This action ensures that New York will continue to pave the way in the fight against cancer and improve access to the most effective treatments, giving patients a better chance of living longer, healthier lives.”

Biomarker testing has become a game-changing part of cancer care given its role in opening the door to personalized care, including targeted treatments that can lead to improved survivorship and quality of life.

Despite the proven benefits, insurance coverage has failed to keep pace with innovations and advancements in biomarker testing and treatment, resulting in some patients being forced to decide whether to pay out-of-pocket or go without the testing that may connect them with lifesaving treatment. Many people of color, individuals with lower incomes and rural communities have been left behind from the benefits of biomarker-informed care. Senate Bill 1196 / Assembly Bill 1673 will help address these gaps in access to biomarker testing.

Leading up to Governor Hochul’s signing of Senate Bill 1196a / Assembly Bill 1673a, patient advocates came out in force to support the bipartisan proposal and promote the importance of biomarker testing.

Mother-daughter duo Mary & Charlotte Carlin have been advocating for the passage of Senate Bill 1196a / Assembly Bill 1673a since its introduction earlier this year, sharing with lawmakers how biomarker testing helped them through their respective cancer journeys. At a recent NYC rally, Mary stood alongside 11-year-old Charlotte as she said, “Patients need the right medicine at the right time — I am urging Governor Hochul to please sign the biomarker bill today — not tomorrow — not next week, today. Every kid like me deserves a chance to grow up.”

Today, they celebrate the enactment of this critical legislation that is good for all patients, not just those with cancer.

ACS CAN led a coalition of more than 65 groups to support the bill through the legislative process. The law is scheduled to go into effect on January 1, 2025.

“Just in time for the holidays, New York has delivered hope to millions of residents who will benefit from biomarker testing,” said Michael Davoli, senior government relations director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network in New York. “This game-changing bill is good for New York — the health of our state and its residents. Ensuring that more New Yorkers will have access to biomarker testing will mean more patients battling cancer and many other forms of chronic disease will have the information needed to identify the best treatments possible. We thank Senator Persaud and Assembly Member Hunter for their leadership on this critical legislation and Governor Hochul for signing it into law.”

For more information on precision medicine, cancer biomarkers, current barriers to biomarker testing and ACS CAN’s policy recommendations, visit: www.fightcancer.org/biomarkers.

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