

Submitter: Kent Toland

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3421

March 19, 2025

Oregon House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care

Hon. Rob Nosse, Chair

Hon. Cyrus Javadi and Travis Nelson, Vice Chairs

Re. HB 3421- Coverage for Biomarker Testing

Dear Representatives Nosse, Javadi and Nelson,

I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at the relatively young age of 54. I was at the peak of my surgical career in Urology. I had obviously racked up many years of education and training and had a busy surgical practice that was, in an instant, over. Given my medical training and constellation of symptoms, the diagnosis in 2013 came as no surprise intellectually. I had also watched my father, an obstetrician/gynecologist struggle with the same disease trajectory eventually succumbing a year after I was diagnosed. The reality is that the disease has not only eclipsed my career but radically altered my activities and life.

When I was in medical school at OHSU my Dad had just been diagnosed with PD and I watched the disease rob him of his career and identity. But in the 1980's on our neurology clinical rotation the teaching was that there was no genetic or familial association or causality. At the time, that was a big relief. We now know that there is a significant genetic propensity.

In recent years, biomarkers have become available to help with the diagnosis of PD. And early diagnosis is often missed by clinicians because the disease presents with such varied and different features. Also by the time I started to have symptoms, a mild tremor in my left thumb and first finger, about 80% of the cells producing dopamine in the central area of my brain had already undergone apoptosis (programmed cell death). The brain can compensate only so long before symptoms of this incurable, progressive disease present.

I urge you to advance HB 3421 so that we can identify patients earlier. Clinical trials and research will be more accurate and afford subsequent patients a chance at a cure instead of relying on the largely palliative measures that currently exist.

Sincerely,

Kent Toland,MD