



Facing Hereditary Cancer EMPOWERED

October 26, 2021

Re: Alabama Medicaid and BRCA Genetic testing

Ms. Huckabee, Ms. Churchwell and Ms. Azar,

You may recall that we corresponded a couple of years ago. I am circling back to inquire about Alabama Medicaid's coverage of a potentially life-saving medical service. **Our state is now the only Medicaid program in the U.S. that doesn't cover BRCA genetic testing** for people who may be at high risk of breast, ovarian and other cancers. As a breast clinic manager for over 25 years, currently at the Montgomery Cancer Center-Prattville, I see many women who would benefit from this testing. I also happen to carry an inherited BRCA2 genetic mutation, so I am knowledgeable both personally and professionally about the value of identifying people who carry these inherited genetic variants.

Women with an inherited BRCA mutation face up to an 85% lifetime risk of breast cancer and a 60% lifetime risk of ovarian cancer. Identifying people at high risk of cancer enables them, with guidance from their providers, to access evidence-based screening and preventive services that significantly lower the risk of cancer or catch it earlier—when it is easier and less expensive to treat. Genetic counseling and testing of appropriate individuals is the current standard-of-care, recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, National Comprehensive Cancer Network, American Society Clinical Oncology, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and numerous other medical organizations.

Alabama residents with Medicare or commercial insurance have access to BRCA testing so there is a true discrepancy in care for Medicaid recipients in our state. Lack of access to genetic testing exacerbates health disparities, resulting in later cancer diagnoses and worse outcomes. Ultimately, offering genetic counseling and testing will save money. Medicaid recipients in our state should not be deprived of these potentially lifesaving, medically necessary services.

I would appreciate an update on consideration of this coverage and welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue and its implications for Alabamans with Medicaid.

Sincerely,

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