



CALIFORNIA
BLACK HEALTH NETWORK



American
Urological
Association



April 21, 2021

The Honorable Marc Levine
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 5135
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support: AB 1520 (Levine) Health care coverage, prostate cancer screening.

Dear Assemblymember Levine,

The undersigned organizations represent physicians and patient advocacy groups in our state who strongly support AB 1520, which would prohibit a health insurance policy from applying a deductible, copayment, or coinsurance for prostate cancer screening. The bill is specifically tailored to apply to individuals who are more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer such as individuals over the age of 55 and high-risk individuals over the age of 40. High risk is defined as a person who is Black, has a family history of prostate cancer, has a genetic predisposition to prostate cancer, or is a veteran.

Our organizations are dedicated to improving access to quality, affordable, and equitable healthcare. Like you, we are frustrated by disparities in healthcare impacting underserved and vulnerable populations in California - putting them disproportionately at increased risk. We applaud your efforts and offer you our support for this legislation.

- Prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among men in the United States and a significant healthcare problem due to its high incidence. Although one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime, the odds increase to one in six if they are Black, and one in three if they have a family history. For 2021, the American Cancer Society projects 25,880 new cases of prostate cancer in California, making it the highest incidence of prostate cancer in America.¹
- The incidence of prostate cancer is almost 80 percent higher in Black men, who have a two-fold

¹ Cancer Facts & Figures 2021, American Cancer Society

higher rate of prostate cancer mortality relative to men of other races. Black men are diagnosed with more aggressive disease, at younger ages, and at higher incidence compared to white men in settings of equal access to treatment.

- This racial disparity in mortality is currently the worst among all cancers in the United States; and to eliminate disparities in prostate cancer we must eliminate the barriers for screening to maximize the early detection of cancer when it is at its most treatable and least lethal stage.
- The clinical value of prostate cancer screening has been scientifically validated and endorsed by the American Urological Association, American Cancer Society, National Comprehensive Cancer Network, American Society of Clinical Oncology, and American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine. It is a necessary step to diagnose prostate cancer as part of a larger conversation between patient and provider about prostate cancer risk.
- Late-stage prostate cancers place an increased economic burden on the health care system, including lost worker productivity and increased financial burdens for patients and their caregivers.
- Existing law requires health insurance policies to provide coverage for the screening and diagnosis of prostate cancer, the cost of these services may deter or prevent high-risk and underserved populations from seeking care and detecting early-stage disease.
- Similar legislation was passed in New York (SB 6882, 2018) and Maryland (SB 661, 2020), which eliminates out-of-pocket expenses for high-risk patients while also protecting them from discrimination and preserving their access to necessary, and often, life-saving screening.

Thank you, and please consider this our endorsement of AB 1520, a crucial bill to ensure California remains a leader in fair and equitable health care delivery.

Respectfully,

ZERO – The End of Prostate Cancer

American Urological Association

California Black Health Network

Answer Cancer Foundation

California Urological Association

ICAN, International Cancer Advocacy Network

Marin Prostate Cancer and Information Support Group

Malecare - Men Fighting Cancer, Together.

Medical Oncology Association of Southern California, Inc.

National Oncology State Network

Oakland CA Prostate Cancer Support Group, Alta Bates Summit Medical Center

Prostate Cancer Foundation

Prostate Health Education Network (PHEN)

Us Too International

American Association of Clinical Urologists

Veterans Prostate Cancer Awareness

CC: California Assembly Health Committee