

Life Science Tennessee (LST) connects companies and communities for cures. As the voice for the state's life sciences industry, we foster collaboration between industry, government, and academic institutions to advance and grow the industry. From medical device companies to world renowned research institutions to exciting biotech startups, our members are essential to the health and economy of Tennessee. Moreover, the products and services we create improve the health and well-being of people throughout the world.

The life science industry is an invaluable component of Tennessee's innovation economy. Statewide resources provided by the Department of Economic & Community Development and LaunchTN support life science research, the commercialization of new technologies, and the development of the ecosystem that helps new technologies and startups scale. Supporting technology-based economic development remains core to our mission.

We have identified the following policy issues for the 114th General Assembly. We applaud the efforts of state legislators to improve patient access to life-saving drugs and therapies.

I. Understand Biomarkers as an Effective Tool to Treat Disease - Support SB 435 / HB 484

Biomarkers are an important, safe tool to treat rare diseases and cancers. Access to appropriate, comprehensive biomarker testing can help determine the best treatment plan for a patient, including targeted therapies that improve survivorship and allow for a better quality of life. While they are effective at improving patient outcomes, biomarker testing is not covered by state regulated insurance plans.

This legislation will expand access to biomarker testing in Tennessee by requiring health insurance plans and TennCare to cover biomarker testing for the purposes of diagnosis, treatment, appropriate management, or ongoing monitoring of a patient's disease or condition. Importantly, the testing requires scientific evidence, must be deemed medically necessary by a licensed physician, and allows for prior authorization requirements. This is responsible legislation that can help achieve the triple aim of health care: better health outcomes, improved quality of life for patients, and reduced costs.

II. Expand Access to Non-Opioid Pain Relief – Support HB 1741 / SB 1790

We applaud the General Assembly's unanimous approval of nonopioid access provisions for the TennCare and state employee health plan (Tennessee ParTNers for Health) programs in 2024 and 2025, respectively. These bills ensured FDA-approved non-opioids would not be subject to more restrictive utilization measures than opioids for the treatment of pain. Building on these successes, the General Assembly HB 1741/SB1790 extends these provisions to individuals receiving health care within the Tennessee Department of Corrections (TDOC) system to ensure patients have equal access to FDA-approved non-opioids.

III. Protect Patients from Unfair Costs – Support SB 420 / HB 870

Insurance companies are increasingly employing copay adjustment programs that prevent cost-sharing assistance from being applied to a patient's deductible or out-of-pocket maximum, removing the lifeline of cost-sharing assistance programs. This eats into the already tight budget patients have, forcing some patients to take harmful actions, such as medicine rationing and prescription abandonment. This legislation would prohibit an insurer, pharmacy benefits manager, or third-party administrator from changing or conditioning the terms of health plan coverage based on availability of financial or other product assistance for a prescription drug as well as establish procedures for calculating an enrollee's contribution to an applicable cost sharing requirement.

IV. Recognize the Importance and Value of Medicine

Life Science Tennessee asks state lawmakers to continue to support policies that champion research and development of life-saving drugs and therapies, including vaccines. New innovations bring cures to the market and curtail the growth of health care costs by effectively treating patients, while providing high-paying jobs to

Tennesseans. We ask that you oppose legislation that would impede the ability to innovate new treatments for patients, including those deemed to be safe and effective like vaccines. The vast majority of Tennessee families are immunized and support strong public health laws. Ensure all families and communities have access to vaccines—and have confidence in taking them. We ask all legislators to work to build trust in vaccines and to support the widespread adoption and dissemination of vital vaccines for numerous infectious diseases.

V. Add Sickle Cell to Newborn Screening – Support HB 1944 / SB 1697

Tennessee is a leader in Newborn Screening programs that detect potentially fatal or disabling conditions in infants. We applaud recent actions taken to expand access for Tennessee families by screening for newly approved conditions that keep pace with advances in gene therapy. This legislation would add Sickle Cell, an inherited disorder that affects the major protein carrying oxygen to red blood cells, to the screening panel.

Join the Life Science Caucus

In addition to the issues we've identified for this session, we encourage legislators to join the Tennessee General Assembly Life Science Caucus chaired by Sen. Reeves and Rep. White to continue their education on life science issues. The mission of the Life Science Caucus is to make Tennessee an innovator in life-saving drugs and therapies that will help everyday Tennesseans live healthier, fuller lives. The caucus has hosted fact-finding missions to the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in Huntsville, AL, and tours of Pfizer's distribution center in Memphis, the Center for Medical Interoperability in Nashville, CrossRoads Extemity Systems in Memphis, and CSL's world testing site for plasma in Knoxville. We have also held several virtual events on personalized medicine, gene therapies, vaccine education and biomarkers.