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WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House Energy and Commerce Committee today approved H.R. 493, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) which will prevent abuses of genetic information for workforce and insurance decisions.

"Genetic testing is a great scientific advancement in our quest to prevent, treat and cure chronic health conditions. That's the good news. The downside is that this inherently personal information can be turned against those it's intended to help if used as a reason to deny job opportunities or basic health insurance coverage," Eshoo said. "This legislation removes these threats and will encourage more patients to take advantage of this life-saving technology."

Eshoo, a senior member of the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee, has championed the need to safeguard genetic information for more than a decade and is a lead cosponsor of H.R. 493.

Under the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act, health insurers will be prohibited from:

- Using genetic information to impose enrollment restrictions or to adjust premium or contribution amounts;
- Requesting genetic testing or results except as necessary for treatment, payment, or health care operations; and
- Requesting or requiring the use of genetic information for the purposes of insurance underwriting.

The legislation requires employers to protect the confidentiality of genetic information and prohibits them from:

- Discriminating against an individual or depriving an individual of employment opportunities base on genetic information; and

- Collecting genetic information except where necessary to monitor the effects of toxic substances in the work place, when authorized by the employee or as required by law.

The legislation, which has also been approved by the Ways and Means Committee and the Education and Labor Committee, is scheduled to be considered by the full House next week.

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