

House Approves Eshoo Bill Prohibiting Genetic Discrimination

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House of Representatives voted 420 to 3 today to approve H.R. 493, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) which will prevent abuses of genetic information for workforce and insurance decisions.

"There are already genetic tests for over 1,000 diseases, and hundreds more are under development. But sadly, the threat of genetic discrimination is making too many Americans less likely to be tested and to participate in clinical trials," Eshoo said.

"This legislation removes these threats and encourages more patients to take advantage of this life-saving technology," she said.

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

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.

H.R. 493 has 224 bipartisan cosponsors and the endorsement of over 200 companies, organizations and universities.

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