

California Congressman Introduces Bill to Promote Genetic, Genomic Testing

Feb 16, 2018 | [staff reporter](#)

NEW YORK (GenomeWeb) – California State Representative Eric Swalwell (CA-D) has introduced legislation designed to promote the use of genetic and genomic testing in healthcare and advance precision medicine.

Called the Advancing Access to Precision Medicine Act, the bill — cosponsored by Representatives John Shimkus (IL-R), Scott Peters (CA-D), Erik Paulsen (MN-R), and Juan Vargas (CA-D) — would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to work with the National Academy of Medicine to study how genetic and genomic testing might improve preventative care and precision medicine and reduce health disparities.

These agencies would also be tasked with determining how the federal government might lower barriers to genetic and genomic testing — for example, by encouraging the expansion of health insurance coverage to cover these tests and improving access to genetic counselors — and whether existing Medicare and Medicaid coverage provisions restrain the use of such testing.

It would also allow individual states to apply for an exception to the federal medical assistance percentage rate in order to provide whole-genome sequencing clinical services for certain children on Medicaid who have an unresolved disease with a suspected genetic cause.

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

"In a world in which therapies exist for only five percent of the 7,000 known rare diseases, genomic sequencing holds the potential to not only accelerate diagnoses, but also personalize treatments, and even speed development and approval of novel therapies," Shimkus said in a statement. "Building on the successful [21st Century Cures Act](#), the Advancing Access to Precision Medicine Act would help low-income families access this innovative technology."