

HB 421_ Addressing Kentucky's colon cancer problem

BY JAMES ALLEN TIPTON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

As we move through July, the legislative interim continues with a full agenda of interim joint committees, statutory committees, and task forces meeting to discuss a wide variety of topics in preparation for the 2026 Regular Session. This week, I would like to take some time to discuss a bill passed in the 2025 Regular Session, HB 421, and its importance to our Commonwealth.

HB 421 requires all health insurance companies in the state of Kentucky to expand access to early colorectal cancer screenings for high-risk individuals and eliminates out-of-pocket costs and prior-authorization for eligible colonoscopy prep materials. Screening for colon cancer is crucial because it can be cured if detected early. Before this bill, insurance companies could refuse to cover the cost of these potentially lifesaving tests if a patient was under 45 years of age, even if they were considered high risk. This new bipartisan legislation aims to save more Kentuckians from this disease through early detection.

The need for this legislation comes as a result of Kentucky having the highest national incidence rate of colon cancer, according to 2022 data from the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention. Across demographic differences, colon cancer rates are alarmingly higher in our state than the national average. For all races and ethnicities, 46.5 people out of 100,000 men and women are diagnosed with colon cancer in Kentucky, compared to the national rate of 36.7. While lifestyle choices, such as diet, exercise, alcohol and tobacco consumption, along with genetics, are contributing factors for colon cancer development, increasing access to testing is action the legislature can take to improve the health of Kentuckians.

As with most cancers, early detection is the best way to prevent disease progression. For people diagnosed with colon cancer in the early stages, 90% survive. Promotion of testing for people that are high risk, alongside people over the age of 45, is the best method for preventing future deaths from colon cancer in Kentucky. With the passing of HB 421, the financial burden of testing is eliminated for these high-risk patients. Because of screenings, colon cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancer, and accessing this healthcare is becoming easier through new legislation. As a result, more patients will be able to test, which will hopefully lead to an increase in early detections of colon cancer and a

decrease in colon cancer fatalities.

If you are at a high risk of developing colon cancer due to family history or other health factors, or are older than 45, I encourage you to start screening now, if you haven't already. Encourage those around you to get tested as well. This is something simple you can do to benefit your health in the future. I want all Kentuckians to have the chance at living longer, healthier lives, which is why I voted in favor of this bill and look forward to it going into effect on January 1, 2026. It is never too late to start taking care of your health, and testing may be your first step in that direction.

As always, I can be reached on my mobile at (502)639-7079 or through the toll-free message line in Frankfort at 1-800-372-7181. You can also contact me via email at James.Tipton@kylegislature.gov and keep track through the Kentucky legislature's website at legislature.ky.gov.


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Closed noon - 1 p.m. for lunch

For More Information:
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