

Testimony of Representative Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Before the Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives
Members' Day Hearing
Tuesday June 4, 2019 10 a.m. 1100 Longworth House Office Building

Good Morning and thank you Chairman Neal, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee for allowing me this opportunity to speak with you today.

As some of you may know, my father, Congressman Donald Payne, Sr., died of colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Though it *is* a preventable disease, my father was not screened for it. Sadly, his case is not unique – one out of every four Americans between the ages of 50 to 75 are not screened for this deadly disease.

If you are an African American male, you are 20 percent more likely to get colorectal cancer and 45 percent more likely to die from it than your Caucasian counterpart. Likewise, if you live in a rural area, you also have a higher chance of getting the disease. Nearly 40 percent of people living in rural areas are not screened. Also, the American Cancer Society recently noted an increase in colorectal cancer in people younger than 50. The reasons behind this upward trend are still unknown.

Until recently, there were only two screening methods: colonoscopy and stool tests. There have historically been barriers to using these two screening methods such as the unpleasant preparation needed, the time needed to perform the tests, and the general aversion to the process itself.

Fortunately, there is a new test that can detect colorectal cancer with a simple blood draw. This blood test, which is FDA approved, is a game changer.

This test has the potential to significantly increase screening, thereby saving lives. The blood test can be done during your lunch hour since it can be performed anywhere you can do a blood draw.

Right now, this blood test is being used in my home district of Newark New Jersey, Miami Florida, Cleveland Ohio and Detroit Michigan. It is also being used on mobile mammogram vehicles in rural pockets of West Virginia.

The United States spends \$18 billion dollars on colorectal cancer per year. Yet, this FDA approved blood test only costs \$192 dollars per test.

Currently, Medicare reimburses for diagnostics tests not screening tests. However, exceptions have been granted. Two of those exceptions were for Colonoscopies and stool testing.

Congress must ensure that these lifesaving blood tests are covered by Medicare. For this reason, I introduced H.R. 1765 The Donald Payne, Sr. Colorectal Cancer Detection Act. This bill would provide Medicare coverage for all FDA approved blood-based tests for colorectal cancer screening. These tests save lives and are cost effective.

My bill enjoys bi-partisan support, which includes support from Representative Marchant who is the Republican lead co-sponsor, as well as support from Representatives Sewell, Moore and Boyle, who are also Members of this Committee.

I respectfully urge this Committee to have a legislative hearing on H.R. 1765. If my father had access to this blood test, perhaps he would still be with me today.

Mr. Chairman, I yield my remaining time.