

March 29, 2012

TO: ALL HOUSE MEMBERS

FROM: REP. DAN B. FRANKEL

RE: Co-sponsorship of Palliative and Concurrent Care legislation

Several months ago, I circulated a co-sponsorship memo to Members seeking their support of two bills that would create greater access to pain management and palliative care for all individuals, particularly young people. After fine-tuning the legislation, I will introduce these bills next week. I hope you will consider lending your support to the important cause of palliative care.

The term palliative care describes medical care that focuses on alleviating symptoms and enhancing the quality of life for people facing serious illness, and for their families. The goal of palliative care is to minimize suffering. So, for example, individuals battling cancer will receive chemotherapy to treat their illness, and palliative care to treat the painful side effects of chemotherapy. Research has shown that people want the opportunity to access palliative care, and that it may even extend the lives of those battling certain illnesses.

One piece of legislation would expand knowledge about palliative care by requiring that physicians take continuing medical education credits in the field of palliative care and pain management. While the field is growing within medical schools and hospitals, many physicians are unfamiliar with the new practice in palliative care. Other states that have passed similar legislation regarding continuing medical education credits include Rhode Island, West Virginia and California. Currently, Pennsylvania doctors are required to take 100 units of continuing education during every two-year license renewal period – the Commonwealth's medical boards have established that 12 of those units must be taken to meet the legislatively designated topics of risk management or patient safety. My legislation would add pain management and palliative care to these topics and let the Commonwealth's medical boards also implement this requirement.

The second piece of legislation would ensure that young people receiving hospice care would not have to forgo treatment to help prolong their lives. Under sec. 2302 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, any young person, as defined by the state, who is eligible for Medicaid or CHIP to receive hospice services will be allowed to receive curative care at the same time. My legislation would extend this mandate to the private sector, so that young people served by private sector insurance would not be denied the opportunity to access life-extending treatment, while also receiving palliative care.

If you would like to join me as a co-sponsor for this legislation, please contact Carrie Goodyear in my office via email (cgoodyea@pahouse.net) or phone (705-1875).

Members who have already signed onto this legislation: Frankel, Barbin, Caltagirone, D. Costa, P. Costa, Davis, Fabrizio, Gibbons, Josephs, Kotik, Longiotti, Mann, Matzie, Murphy, Pashinski, Santarsiero, Staback, Sturla, Youngblood, Donatucci.