



March 17, 2010

Dear Chairman DeLuca and Members of the House Insurance Committee:

On behalf of cancer patients in our commonwealth, I am writing to note support for House Bill 1865 by the American Cancer Society.

This legislation addresses an important access to care issue. We are aware that, for many patients, quality of life is enhanced if they are able to receive their chemotherapy or anti-nausea drugs in oral (rather than intravenous) form. Evidence suggests that these oral medications are a more comfortable, less invasive way to treat cancer for many patients. Oral chemotherapy may also have less adverse side effects than IV treatment, and these medications do not need to be taken in a physician's office.

This past year we assisted 1,099 cancer patients with 9,630 round trips through our Road to Recovery program here in Pennsylvania. Not everyone is located in close proximity to his or her oncologist, and these trips can take both a physical and financial toll on patients during the treatment process. When a cancer patient is able to take an oral medication, he or she is not required to take a several hour, in-office IV treatment, and office trips can be reduced.

Unfortunately, the way in which intravenous (IV) and oral medications are covered in health plans can be very different. IV treatments are generally covered under a plan's medical benefit, while oral medications are covered under the prescription drug benefit. Sometimes these benefits, though offered by the same plan, are actually administered by two different carriers. Coverage of oral chemotherapies under prescription drug benefits is often problematic, requiring additional paper work as well as an additional deductible or copay.

Cancer is a difficult, life-changing diagnosis. In working with their physicians, patients deserve the best choices available for their cancer treatment. The last thing they need are delays or coverage difficulties.

The American Cancer Society recommends that all health plans include prescription drug coverage as part of medical benefits.

Sincerely,

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