

CANCER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS
ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

February 24, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Madam Speaker, Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader Boehner, and Minority Leader McConnell:

The undersigned cancer organizations, representing cancer patients and their families, caregivers, and researchers, urge you to work collaboratively and without delay for enactment of a health reform bill.

This year, 1.4 million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer and more than half a million will die from cancer. More than 10.5 million cancer survivors are living in the United States today. Nearly 1 in 2 men and 1 in 3 women will develop cancer during their lifetime. Cancer is a fact of life for millions of Americans and for millions more family members and caregivers.

From the moment of diagnosis, cancer patients have urgent health care needs. Cancer survivors and all Americans at risk for cancer require access to a health care system that provides high quality and affordable prevention, detection, treatment and survivorship care, a system that is possible if a reform bill is enacted.

In the current health care system, cancer patients often face serious obstacles to care. They may lose the insurance they have and become uninsurable in the future, all because of their cancer diagnosis. Even those with insurance may find that their care is unaffordable due to significant out-of-pocket costs and annual and lifetime coverage limits. This economic challenge becomes one of survival and quality of life, because cancer patients' treatment outcomes are adversely affected by their insurance problems.

Health reform legislation holds promise for guaranteeing cancer patients access to quality care by restricting practices that prevent cancer patients from obtaining or retaining insurance, eliminating pre-existing condition exclusions, placing limits on out-of-pocket costs, and eliminating annual and lifetime caps.

The bill approved by Congress and signed into law should: 1) eliminate pre-existing condition exclusions and address other insurance practices that limit coverage due to health condition or diagnosis, 2) include protections from out-of-pocket costs that might hinder access to care, 3) eliminate cost-sharing requirements for prevention and screening services, 4) ensure payment for routine care costs for those enrolled in clinical trials, 5) advance delivery reforms through demonstration projects and pilot programs, and 6) retain a focus on patients and their care by including patients in advisory panels such as that charged with defining an essential benefit package.

We urge you to address the problems confronted by millions of cancer patients each year by promptly enacting a health reform bill that embodies the values and requirements discussed in this letter.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Psychosocial Oncology Society
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society of Clinical Oncology
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
Breast Cancer Network of Strength
C3: Colorectal Cancer Coalition
Cancer Support Community
The Children's Cause for Cancer Advocacy
Coalition of Cancer Cooperative Groups
Education Network to Advance Cancer Clinical Trials (ENACCT)
International Myeloma Foundation
Lance Armstrong Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lymphoma Research Foundation
Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Comprehensive Cancer Network
National Lung Cancer Partnership
National Patient Advocate Foundation
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance

Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Susan G. Komen for the Cure Advocacy Alliance
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network

cc: All Senators and Representatives