

DEADLIEST CANCERS COALITION

June 27, 2017

Dear [Senator] [Senator Last Name]:

As members of the Deadliest Cancers Coalition, a collaboration of national nonprofit organizations focused on addressing issues related to our nation's most lethal cancers, we are writing to express our concern about the Better Care Reconciliation Act, the Senate version of the health bill released on June 22. Specifically, we are concerned that it reduces healthcare coverage for our nation's sickest cancer patients.

When it passed the Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act (Public Law 112-239), Congress defined the deadliest or recalcitrant cancers as those with a five-year survival rate below 50 percent. While a variety of cancers fall under this definition, nearly half of the cancer deaths that will occur this year will be caused by seven site-specific cancers: ovary, brain, stomach, esophagus, lung, liver, and pancreas. Although each is unique, patients with one of the deadliest cancers all share at least two common challenges – an exceptionally low survival rate, particularly given that the five-year survival rate for all cancers overall is now 69 percent, and that there are few early detection tools and/or effective treatments.

While the current version of the Senate health bill has some improvements over the American Health Care Act passed by the House in May, we are deeply concerned that the June 22 version of the Senate health bill allows states to change what qualifies as an essential health benefit (EHB). In other words, our analysis of this bill is that a patient with one of the deadliest cancers may be priced out of the actual cancer-related treatments that they need, even if they can afford their premiums. As a result, these patients will not only face the fear of a devastating disease, they will also have to face the fear of deciding between treatment or putting their families' economic security in peril. Further, without protection for preventative testing and care, more patients will end up being diagnosed with one of these deadliest cancers. .

We strongly urge you to work in a bi-partisan manner to reconsider the current version of the bill and not bring it to the floor until these issues have been appropriately addressed so that there are no lapses or reduction in health coverage for this critical population.

Sincerely,

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American College of Gastroenterology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Liver Foundation
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization
Blue Faery: The Adrienne Wilson Liver Cancer Association
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer
Digestive Disease National Coalition

Esophageal Cancer Action Network
Hepatitis B Foundation
International Myeloma Foundation
Lung Cancer Alliance
Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation
National Brain Tumor Society
National Ovarian Cancer Coalition, Inc.
National Pancreas Foundation
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
TargetCancer Foundation