

CANCER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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

December 23, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader-elect
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Speaker, Leaders Pelosi, McConnell, and Reid, and Leader-elect Schumer:

The undersigned organizations represent cancer patients and caregivers, physicians and other health professionals, and researchers who depend on access to affordable and high-quality cancer care. Our organizations and those we represent look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure that Americans have access to affordable and high-quality health care.

We urge that Congress not move to repeal provisions of the Affordable Care Act until specific legislative proposals are identified to replace the ACA. It is critical that the replacement of the ACA protect access to care for cancer patients across the continuum of their disease and that there not be a period of uncertainty in the insurance market that might result in loss of access to affordable insurance coverage and therefore access to care. Cancer patients in need of active

treatment and appropriate symptom management, as well as cancer survivors who need survivorship care including monitoring, follow-up services, and preventive services, stand at risk of losing access to life-saving care if there are significant disruptions in the insurance market.

Americans with cancer have significant health care needs, ranging from accurate diagnosis and appropriate therapies for their specific diagnosis to management of side effects during treatment and long-term survivorship care to address the late and long-term effects of cancer and cancer treatments. Cancer patients may need acute and urgent treatment and may also require chronic care over a lifetime. A diagnosis of cancer is a life-changing experience that immediately alters the patient's relationship with the health care system.

Americans with cancer have benefited greatly from public and private sector investments in research and development of new treatments, which have made cancer cures a reality for some and long-term survivorship a reality for many others. In addition, cancer patients and health care providers are engaged in collaborations to improve delivery and payment for cancer care. These innovations are ensuring that cancer patients receive better care and better quality of life and are encouraging the delivery of patient-centered cancer care.

As you turn your attention to action related to the Affordable Care Act, we urge you to remember the acute, chronic, and lifetime needs of cancer patients. For these Americans, a disruption in the insurance market may translate to a loss of affordable insurance coverage and access to care. That can in turn mean significant disruptions in care, adverse outcomes, and unmanageable costs of care. Our organizations have already been contacted by patients who are experiencing serious stress caused by anticipation of loss of affordable insurance and therefore a loss of access to care; this stress may in turn adversely affect treatment outcomes.

The burden of such disruptions on individual patients would be acute, but the system itself would also be harmed if cancer patients receive delayed or inadequate care. We all share a goal of an affordable health system that provides patient-centered care, and we must ensure that policy changes to achieve that goal do not deny care to cancer patients during the legislative process and implementation of new laws.

The undersigned organizations have been guided by several core principles of health reform. We have sought a health system that ensures all cancer patients access to care that is affordable and that does not force them into bankruptcy if they require complex care. We also have sought to ensure that the health insurance system supports the delivery of cancer care that is increasingly personalized. Finally, the health care system must provide cancer patients access to innovations – both new treatments and innovations in the delivery of patient-centered care.

We look forward to working with you to achieve our shared vision of a patient-centered health care system.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
CancerCare
Cancer Support Community
The Children's Cause for Cancer Advocacy
Fight Colorectal Cancer
International Myeloma Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
LIVESTRONG Foundation
Lymphoma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Susan G. Komen