



**TESTIMONY OF  
CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
REGARDING SB 459  
AN ACT PROMOTING THE EARLY DETECTION, DIAGNOSIS AND  
TREATMENT OF LUNG CANCER,  
BREAST CANCER, AND CERVICAL CANCER**

**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH  
March 3, 2008**

The Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) would like to thank the committee for their recognition of the devastating role that cancer plays in Connecticut's public health. CPHA strongly supports funding for cancer prevention programs and is pleased to endorse SB 459, An Act Promoting the Early Detection, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Lung Cancer, Breast Cancer, and Cervical Cancer. CPHA is the state's professional organization providing leadership in health promotion and prevention of disease among the people of Connecticut.

In 2007, approximately 20,000 of Connecticut's residents were expected to develop cancer. The main cancers that affect Connecticut's residents are female breast, lung, colon/ rectum, pancreatic, and prostate. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Connecticut and accounts for more than 7,000 deaths or approximately 25 percent of all deaths in the state. While there has been some reduction in breast, prostate and colorectal cancer deaths, lung cancer decreased among males but rose significantly for females and the death rate for pancreatic cancer has remained the same.

Cancer is now the leading cause of death among adults in Connecticut 45 to 84 years old. Because cancer incidence is related to age, the rate of new cancer cases is growing each year, reflecting the aging of our population. Of equal concern is the increase of health disparities regarding knowledge of, and access to, cancer prevention and preventive screenings, access to cancer diagnostic resources and cancer patient care. People of color, the poor, and uninsured residents in Connecticut are more likely to get and die from certain cancers. In 2005, one half billion dollars was spent on cancer related hospitalizations in Connecticut.

As many as half of all cancer cases in Connecticut could be avoided or delayed by implementing various behavior change strategies. Never starting or quitting smoking, eating a diet that is low in salt and fat and high in fruits and vegetables, lowering weight and increasing physical activity, and low alcohol consumption are all preventive steps that can be taken. When cancer is not prevented, early detection is important to increasing chances for survival. Actions that can be taken for early detection are cancer screenings and self-examinations. Tests such as colonoscopies and pap tests can find abnormal growths that can be taken out before they become cancers. The American Cancer Society

recommends that women age 40 or older have an annual mammogram, have an annual clinical breast exam performed by a health care professional, and perform a monthly breast self-examination. The pap smear is the test used to identify pre-cancerous cells in the early stages of cervical cancer. When diagnosed at this stage, the disease is often curable. There is also some evidence that low-dose CAT scans and chest x-rays and sputum cytology can find cancers earlier than without screening.

Although, research has shown that screening tests can make a difference, many of Connecticut's residents are still not getting tested. Thirty-one percent of people 50 years of age and older in Connecticut have never been screened for colorectal cancer. The American Cancer Society estimates that 7.1 percent of Connecticut women age 18 or over have never had a pap smear. As many as 12 percent of women age 18-44 have not had a pap smear in the last two years.

On behalf of CPHA I would like to thank the Committee for its invaluable leadership in addressing the public health needs of our state. While there have been improvements in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, much more can be done. The proposed bill SB 459 offers to make improvements in coverage for breast and cervical cancer screening programs. Through this bill, \$15.75M will be assigned to provide funding for cancer prevention programs and initiatives which are a vital part of the state's comprehensive cancer plan.

The Connecticut Public Health Association wishes to thank the Committee for the opportunity to address this important public health issue. For additional information on CPHA's position on cancer prevention and other public health issues, contact CPHA's Advocacy Committee co-chairs Annamarie Beaulieu at 860.301.8857 or [annamarie.beaulieu@cpha.info](mailto:annamarie.beaulieu@cpha.info), or Marty Mancuso at 860.496.6488 or [marty.mancuso@cpha.info](mailto:marty.mancuso@cpha.info).

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