



**Public Health Committee
March 3, 2008
American Cancer Society Testimony**

SB 459 –An Act Promoting the Early Detection, Diagnosis and Treatment of Lung Cancer, Breast Cancer and Colon Cancer.

My name is Patricia Trotta, RN, MSN, from the American Cancer Society, New England Division. I am here to testify on behalf of the American Cancer Society and the over six thousand Society volunteers in the state of Connecticut, in support of Senate Bill 459 **An Act Promoting the Early Detection, Diagnosis and Treatment of Lung Cancer, Breast Cancer and Colon Cancer.**

Cancer is a major public health problem in Connecticut and the United States, and is our nation's second leading cause of death, killing more people every year than every war in the 20th century combined. About 20,000 Connecticut residents are expected to develop cancer in 2008 and more than 7,000 Connecticut residents will die this year from cancer. However, cancer is also the most preventable and curable among our nation's chronic diseases.

Early detection saves lives by allowing for the identification of precancerous tissue so that it can be removed before becoming cancerous. For some sites, screening can prevent the cancer from even occurring, as when precancerous polyps are detected and removed during colonoscopy procedures used to screen for colorectal cancer. Detecting cancers early is a critical so that treatment can begin as soon as possible, ultimately resulting in increased health care savings and most importantly, saving lives.

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women in Connecticut and the US. Since 1990, death rates from breast cancer have declined by an average of 2.4% per year. These decreases are due to earlier detection through screening, increased awareness and improved treatment. We can be proud of the strides we have made in detecting breast cancers early.

One of the most important tools in our early detection arsenal, the CDC and state-funded Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program allows women who have no insurance to receive these vital services, leading to early detection and increases in treatment options. The Comprehensive Cancer Plan seeks to increase screening and diagnostic services to up to 2000 uninsured and underserved woman, especially those experiencing health disparities.

Additionally, 5 new Health Care Provider Sites will be established to expand delivery of breast and cervical cancer screening services to the estimated eligible women throughout the state. This will ensure sufficient capacity for the delivery of program services.

Colorectal Cancer

In Connecticut, colorectal cancer is the third most frequently diagnosed cancer in men and the second most common cancer in women. It is also the third leading cause of cancer death in both men and women. Colorectal cancer screening by colonoscopy is regarded as the most reliable because this procedure is the most highly sensitive compared to other tests; it examines the entire colon; and it allows for the screening, diagnosis, and removal of polyps in a single visit.

The death rate from colorectal cancer has been dropping for the past 20 years. This is likely due to the fact that polyps are being found by screening before they can develop into cancers. Colorectal cancer is being found earlier when it is easier to cure, and there have been great strides in the area of treatment.

Through the initial implementation of the Comprehensive Cancer Plan, a colorectal screening pilot program was developed. This pilot program seeks to screen up to 1200 people at 12 Community Health Center sites statewide, provide for promotion of these services and an evaluation of their utilization and success.

There is still much work to be done. For example, we need to fully understand the issues and needs of underserved populations in our state and then we need to work together to develop a plan to address their needs to assure they have equal access to early detection screenings.

The mission of the American Cancer Society is to work towards eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service. The only way to achieve our mission in the fight against cancer is through a comprehensive approach addressing the continuum of care from prevention to early detection, treatment, survivorship and end of life. The comprehensive cancer control plan, allows for just that type of approach. On behalf of the American Cancer Society, please vote favorably for Senate Bill 459 and give the cancer patients of today and those of tomorrow a fighting chance!

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