American Cancer Society®

Human Services Committee
March 4, 2008

Testimony of the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is urging your support of **SB 558, An Act Concerning The Availability of Hospice Services Under The Medicaid Program.**

Hospice services provide supportive care for patients and their family at the end stages of an individual's life. The services allow the individual to feel as comfortable as possible, help relieve symptoms, and give them the best possible quality of life care. Accepting death is central to hospice care, yet the emphasis on care reflects the positive aspects of life. Hospice works with the patients and family to provide the care, meet the functional, emotional and spiritual needs of the patient at the end of their life.

Many states currently have in place Medicaid hospice benefit services. A study that was released in 2003 revealed that hospice care services provided to Medicaid beneficiaries coping with life-limiting illness results in significant cost savings to states. It cited that hospice care annually saves Medicaid approximately $282 million nationwide or approximately $7,000 per hospice-eligible beneficiary.

Hospice care allows the patent to determine how they want to spend the rest of their days. Much of the hospice care given in a patients home. Home hospice care is less costly than hospitals and nursing homes. By instituting hospice services under Medicaid, Connecticut has the potential to save from otherwise hospital and nursing home expenses.

SB 558 will allow individuals near the end of their life, to make their own decision on how they want to spend their last days. Any end of life care should be a personal decision, as well one in which their surviving family will not need to be financially burdened. The quality of dying is the overwhelming issue at the end of life, people that accept end of life do not want to prolong it, or worry about what the burden they will leave after their passing.

The American Cancer Society not only focuses upon early detection and treatment of cancer, but as well as end of life care. The goal of any cancer care is to provide the best quality of life that is possible. The best quality of care should be given to those near the end of their life as much as those that were able to defeat their illness.

Please support this piece of legislation so that Medicaid patients can enjoy the quality of life that they rightly deserve.