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**Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 3, 2009
American Cancer Society Testimony**

SB 7 – An Act Concerning Health Insurance for Uninsured Persons.

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. Approximately 20,000 Connecticut residents are expected to develop cancer in 2009 and over 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.

But what good do all the prevention, early detection and treatment programs and services do if people don't have access to them?

The American Cancer Society believes that all people should have unimpeded access to comprehensive, quality health care services. This care includes cancer prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, rehabilitation and long-term care through the end of life. The Society recognizes that serious gaps exist in accessibility, affordability, adequacy, administrative simplicity and quality of health care for many people, which must be addressed by the nation as a whole.

The uninsured have less of a chance of receiving lifesaving cancer detection screenings, such as mammograms, Pap tests, colonoscopies and PSA tests. The uninsured have a much greater chance of being diagnosed with a late-stage cancer that is much more difficult to treat and cure than an early-stage cancer. Additionally, the uninsured have less of a chance of receiving newer treatments, and a greater chance of being denied any treatment at all.

We must apply equally what we know about cancer prevention, early detection and treatment to ensure that all people—especially those in communities that suffer a disproportionate burden of cancer—benefit from major cancer breakthroughs. One step to that end is to increase the number of individuals with meaningful health insurance coverage and affordable access to the full range of high quality cancer-related services, prevention through end of life.

The American Cancer Society supports the concept behind SB 7-- that a mandatory health insurance plan for uninsured persons not eligible for the Medicaid program or the Medicare program be created for the uninsured in Connecticut. SB 7 would help Connecticut take a step towards meaningful access and help ease the financial burden on health care and deserves thoughtful deliberation by our policy-makers.

We stand ready to work with the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, the legislature and all others to ensure that all people have access to the full spectrum of cancer care. SB 7 is an important beginning effort that will help ensure that more people get coverage and therefore improved access to care and we urge your support.