



**Insurance and Real Estate Committee**

**March 1, 2011**

**Testimony of the American Cancer Society**

FTR

**RE: SB 1083, An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage Of Prescription Drugs For Pain Treatment.**

Pain remains one of the most feared and burdensome symptoms for cancer patients and survivors. Pain associated with cancer can almost always be relieved, yet it is a problem in at least 60% of patients in active treatment.

When a patient is prescribed an expensive or risky, branded drug, a payer may determine that the patient will not be allowed coverage on that drug until other, less expensive or less risky protocols have been tried, first. If it works well for the patient, then no more steps are needed. However, if the patient does not have the desired outcomes with the first drug, then a second drug, the next least expensive or risky drug in the same class, will be tried until the patient takes a drug that is effective and costs the least amount of money.

The rationale behind step therapy is that it ensures that patients receive appropriate medications in a cost effective manner, while reducing waste, error and unnecessary drug use. However, this can lead to delays in proper treatment as well as unnecessary discomfort to the patients themselves and potential increased costs in the form of unplanned emergency room, doctor visits or other health complications.

SB 1083 seeks to prohibit individual and group health insurance policies that provide coverage for prescription drugs from requiring insureds to use, prior to using a brand name prescription drug prescribed by a licensed physician for pain treatment, any alternative brand name prescription drugs or over-the-counter drugs. ***While we do not have a formal position on this legislation, we view the physician-patient decision-making process as a critical component of proper care and prefer to avoid policies that may not be in the patient's best interest in that regard.***

Cancer-related pain can interfere with patients' ability to complete scheduled treatments, and can devastate quality of life – affecting work, appetite, sleep, and time with family and friends. Open communication with healthcare professionals about pain, the medications for it, and other methods available to treat it is essential to relieve symptoms and improve quality of life.

Thank you.