



American Cancer Society
Cancer Action Network
825 Brook Street
I-91 Tech Center
Rocky Hill, CT. 06067
(203)-379-4850
www.acscan.org

Public Health Committee□
March 5, 2014

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Testimony

HB 5386 (RAISED) - AN ACT CONCERNING CARE COORDINATION FOR CHRONIC DISEASE.

Achieving Patient Centered & Family Focused Care in Connecticut

It goes without question that our nation has made significant progress in the treatment of cancer. Today, we are saving 350 more lives per day than we were in 1990. However, as doctors focus on the treatment of a patient's cancer, the patients' comfort and concerns are frequently overlooked. People with cancer often suffer not only from the disease, but also from pain, nausea, shortness of breath, anxiety and other symptoms in their struggle to get well.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACSCAN) is pleased to support HB 5386 (Raised) An Act Concerning Care Coordination for Chronic Disease. The bill would require the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health in consultation with others to develop a chronic care plan aimed at improving chronic care coordination and reducing the incidences of chronic disease in Connecticut.

We would respectfully request that Section 1 of the bill be amended to include the Palliative Care Advisory Council among the groups to be consulted with in the development of this chronic care plan.

"Section 1. (NEW) (Effective October 1, 2014) (a) The Commissioner of Public Health, in consultation with the Comptroller, the Palliative Care Advisory Council, and representatives of hospitals and other health care facilities and local and regional health departments, shall develop a plan: (1) To reduce the incidence of chronic disease, including, but not limited to, chronic cardiovascular disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lung disease, chronic metabolic disease and psychiatric illness; (2) to improve chronic care coordination in the state; and (3) for each type of health care facility, to reduce the incidence and effects of chronic disease."

Treating the whole patient—not only the disease but also the physical and psychological consequences of treatment—is the key to both extending life and enhancing the quality of the time gained. Palliative care *is appropriate at any age and any stage of a serious or chronic illness*. Evidence building over the past decade has consistently demonstrated the benefits of palliative care in improving quality of life and addressing the harmful effects of pain, symptoms and emotional distress as well as family caregiver burden, making a clear case for the importance and value of providing palliative care at the same time

patients are provided disease-directed treatments. More recent evidence also shows that palliative care may enhance survival and reduce costs driven by unnecessary use of hospitals, diagnostic and treatment interventions, and non-beneficial intensive care.

Patients and families facing serious illness need to be educated about palliative care so they can find their way to the best choices that minimize symptoms and suffering while fighting disease. Pain, worry and other symptoms and side effects of cancer and its treatment, for example, are not an inevitable consequence of cancer. They typically can be controlled. While enhancing palliative care information and awareness, we must also enact policies to cultivate and support development of more health care professionals who are trained to provide this multidisciplinary care to meet the growing community need.

As HB 5386 comes at a time when state policy makers remain very active on issues affecting care for chronic illnesses, establishing a framework for collaboration and consensus-building at the state level is all the more important. This is particularly important for the growing population of older adults living with chronic, serious illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, lung disease, and dementia. HB 5386, will ultimately lead to patients and families having more control and choice about treatment options and will encourage more informed and shared decision making.

Submitted by
Bryte Johnson
Government Relations Director
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network