

Yale University



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Dear Representative Megna and Members of the Committee,

We are writing this letter in support of H.B. No. 5500, An Act Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Fertility Preservation for Insureds Diagnosed With Cancer. Unfortunately, cancer is not exclusively a disease of the elderly. Of the 400,000 breast cancers diagnosed in the United States per year, 15% are found in women under the age of 40. Additionally, there are almost 10,000 new cases of blood cancers (including leukemia and lymphoma) per year. Many of these young people have either not started or not completed their families.

Fortunately, thanks to excellent developments in chemotherapy protocols, cancer has become an increasingly curable disease, and all of these cancers have excellent survival. About 85% of young patients will survive a cancer diagnosis, and today 1 in every 700 young adults is a cancer survivor. As such, quality of life has become an important consideration for survivors. Unfortunately, one well-known side effect of many chemotherapies is toxicity to the ovaries and testicles, resulting in infertility. This is obviously a devastating sequela for young patients who have already overcome a life-altering disease.

Today, it is possible to preserve future fertility in the form of egg, embryo, sperm, or ovarian tissue freezing prior to chemotherapy. The American Society of Reproductive Medicine has removed the "experimental" label from egg freezing technology, making it now an established procedure. Unfortunately, due to lack of insurance coverage for fertility preservation options, many patients are unable to access this and other technologies. Thus a profound moral injustice is perpetuated, because these young patients are forever reminded by their infertility of the disease they overcame.

As an academic institution, we offer premier cancer therapies at our Smilow Cancer Center, and we receive 200+ referrals per year for discussion of fertility preservation, but only a quarter of those patients can afford to take advantage of these options. Thus, it is our plea that you will seriously consider expanding insurance coverage to include fertility preservation as an added benefit. This will alleviate both psychological and physical suffering on the part of our young cancer survivors, who deserve our full support in their quest for a normal quality of life, including access to reproduction. Such access is, as the United Nation states, a "basic human right and an indispensable ingredient of human dignity".

Respectfully submitted,

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On behalf of the Connecticut Section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

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