Appropriations Committee
Health and Hospitals - Department of Public Health
March 1, 2019

H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Re: Health and Hospitals - Department of Public Health – Prevention and Early Detection

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. No. 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR. ACS CAN is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society that supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. In 2019 it is estimated that approximately 21,950 Connecticut residents will be diagnosed with cancer while 6,470 will die from the disease.

Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

ACS CAN applauds the Governor for funding, at $2.179 million, the state Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program (BCCEDP) through the Insurance Fund.

The Affordable Care Act has helped to improve insurance coverage, raise awareness, and reduce the costs of breast and cervical cancer screenings for women, by requiring private insurers, Medicare, and Medicaid expansion programs to cover routine preventive services at no cost to the patient. However, millions of underinsured and uninsured women across the country still do not have access to these lifesaving screenings. Low-income women, particularly minorities, often face later stage cancer diagnoses; have less access to diagnostic and treatment services; and lower survival rates.

The Connecticut Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provides free pap tests to women aged 21 to 64 and mammograms to women 40 to 64 who are uninsured or underinsured and have income below 250% of the federal poverty line. These services include: routine breast and cervical cancer screenings and exams, patient navigation, care coordination, quality improvement and surveillance and monitoring of women with either a cancer diagnosis or abnormal test results, in an effort to detect cancers at its earliest stages when the chances for survival are the greatest.
Providing funding in FY ’20 of $2.179 million for the program will preserve a critical safety net for thousands of Connecticut women, who will continue to lack access to essential screening, diagnostic, and treatment services.

The need is clear-- breast and cervical cancers have alarming incidence and death rates for Connecticut residents. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women in Connecticut; furthermore, the state has the third- highest incidence of female breast cancer in the nation and ranks 30th in the nation for breast cancer mortality. The survival rate for cervical cancer would be over 90% if all women over the age of 18 who are sexually active had a Pap test on a regular basis. 

The program is funded with 30% federal dollars and 70% state funding. Overall, according to the Department of Public Health, in FY ’17: 4,314 women received 3,776 clinical breast exams, 2,570 mammograms, and 2,116 Pap tests with 1,615 HPV co-testing through BCEEDP funding. With program funding, 36 women were diagnosed with breast cancers and referred for treatment. Three women were diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer and an additional 35 women had precancerous cervical lesions removed before developing cervical cancer.

Once diagnosed with precancerous cervical lesions, many women are fast-tracked to Medicaid covered through the Cancer Treatment Act. 35 women were diagnosed through the program with precancerous cervical lesions.

The 4,314 women screened represent 1.4% (4314/296259) of the target population ages for 21-64 to receive early detection and prevention services and 10.0% (4314/43108) of that population considered to be uninsured.

ACS CAN recognizes the enormous impact the Connecticut Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program has delivered in saving the lives of low-income, uninsured and underinsured women diagnosed with breast and cervical cancer. The proven success of this early detection program demands funding levels that will provide access to these services for all eligible women. Maintaining state funding of $2.145 million for FY ’19 for breast and cervical cancer screenings for low income, uninsured or underinsured women through the program is vital so that no woman is denied these life-saving services.

Human Papillomavirus Vaccine via Connecticut Vaccine Program

ACS CAN strongly believes in preventing cancer before it develops and in detecting cancer early, when it is more easily treated. We support policies that remove barriers to care and increase access to cancer screening and early detection services.

HPV are a group of more than 150 related viruses and HPV infections are very common - nearly 80 million people in the US are currently infected with HPV. Each year, approximately 30,700 men and women are diagnosed with cancers caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).
causes over 90 percent of cervical cancers, 69 percent of vulvar cancers, 75 percent of vaginal cancers, 63 percent of penile cancers, 91 percent of anal cancer, and 72 percent of oropharyngeal cancers\textsuperscript{vi}.

Vaccines are available to help prevent infection by certain types of HPV and some of the cancers linked to those types. All HPV vaccines help prevent infection by HPV-16 and HPV-18. These 2 types cause about 70% of all cervical cancers and pre-cancers, as well as many cancers of the anus, penis, vulva, vagina, and throat\textsuperscript{vii}. The HPV vaccine produces the strongest immune response in preteens. To work best, the HPV vaccines should be given at age 11 or 12.

Since the first HPV vaccine was recommended in the US in 2006, prevalence of some types of HPV infections have declined by nearly two-thirds among teenage girls aged 14-19 and over a third among women 20-24 years old\textsuperscript{viii}. Despite the vaccine’s ability to prevent most cervical, vaginal, vulvar, penile, anal, rectal, and oropharyngeal cancers, vaccination rates remain very low. Only 55 percent of girls and 42 percent of boys in Connecticut are fully vaccinated from HPV.

The HPV vaccine can prevent multiple types of cancer that will reduce Connecticut’s cancer burden. The Governor’s proposal to continue to make the vaccine available to all 11-12-year-old boys and girls through the Connecticut Vaccine Program will help increase vaccination uptake, ultimately reducing cancer incidence and mortality in the state of Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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