



March 4, 2015

The Senate Committee on Health Care
c/o The Honorable Senator Monnes Anderson, Chair
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: SB 608 relating to palliative care

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for hearing SB 608 and inviting testimony from the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) and others interested in the bill.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. We support evidence based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem.

As part of our 2015 legislative agenda, ACS CAN is endorsing legislation that improves the quality and delivery of palliative care services in Oregon by convening an interdisciplinary council to work through a host of questions and issues regarding palliative care.

What is Palliative Care? Palliative care is specialized medical care that focuses on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain, and stress associated with serious illnesses. It provides a coordinated and team-based approach among medical professionals to help ensure the patients' needs are met throughout treatment and survivorship. It gives patients and their families a voice in realizing their treatment goals, and is appropriate at any age and any stage in a serious illness. It can be applied to both in-patient and out-patient services.

Why Palliative Care? People want palliative care. Recent public opinion research shows that once informed about palliative care, 92% of consumers say these services should be available for seriously ill patients and their families. Palliative care is also supported by an overwhelming majority of doctors. It is also important to note that quality care leads to cost reduction. Recent studies indicate that by closely matching treatments with a patient's goals, and improving their quality of life, palliative care can provide substantial cost reduction. It reduces long lengths of hospital stay, high costs per day, and high utilization of critical care and other hospital resources.

In addition, in any organization communication barriers develop as professionals go about their busy schedules. People become preoccupied with multiple responsibilities and forget to communicate and coordinate needed services in the most efficient manner.

The interdisciplinary council will work to identify and work through these types of issues that prevent patients and their caregivers from receiving the best service possible. The council will further raise awareness, availability, and utilization of palliative care services.

SB 608 further specifies council membership, purpose and responsibilities, number of meetings (two a year), and meeting / administrative requirements.

ACS CAN passed the same legislation in five other states (CT, RI, MA, NH, and MD) with no or very little fiscal impact. The only expenses these five states incurred are printing costs, mileage charges for the council members to travel to a couple of meetings, and the costs of a catered lunch for meetings. From ACS CAN's understanding, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) web site already exists. Thus, there is no web site development involved. Maintenance for the web site should also already be covered or budgeted. All we are asking for is a single link for health care professionals and the public to access existing information. Updating information via the link would not be a regular occurrence.

Our testimonial panels today will highlight the experiences of both cancer patients and health care professionals, including Dr. Laura Mavity from St. Charles Hospital in Bend and Dr. Eric Fromme and Susan Hedlund, manager of Patient and Family Services, from Oregon Health Science University in Portland. The Committee is also in receipt of written supportive testimony from: the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and others.

Once again, thank you for hearing this good-little bill.

Best regards,



Troy Rayburn, Director
Oregon Government Relations
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network