

SB 987 (Portantino) California Cancer Care Equity Act

PROBLEM

There are significant disparities in cancer patient access to specialized care that includes genomic testing, precision medicine-based care, subspecialty expertise, and clinical trials which result in inferior survival outcomes for those patients who cannot access this care they need with the necessary urgency.

BACKGROUND

Amazing advances in cancer science are creating more effective treatments and cures for patients affected by cancer. However, many cancer patients with complex diagnoses unfortunately are not given the opportunity to benefit from this knowledge and level of care – and too many die as a result.

Although the majority of cancer patients receive quality care in community settings, many patients with complex cancer diagnosis require the expertise of latest advancements in cancer care to provide the most optimal care including clinical trials which play an essential role in the care of patients with cancer.

Unfortunately, there are significant disparities in access to care for cancer patients. The impact of these care disparities is greater for patients who are Medi-Cal beneficiaries, especially those who come from underserved communities.

Medi-Cal patients with breast, colon, lung and rectal cancer are more likely to be diagnosed at an advanced stage of disease and have less favorable 5-year survival rates.

Our current one-size-fits-all Medi-Cal system prevents too many California cancer patients from accessing optimal care, and too many Californians realize that health insurance doesn't equal access to experts specializing in complex cancer types, promising clinical trials, and advances in personalized, precision cancer treatments.

Last year, The Cancer Patients Bill of Rights resolution (SCR 11 – S. Rubio) was passed unanimously by the California Legislature, making it the first state in the nation to adopt a bill of rights for cancer patients. The Bill of Rights lays out six rights that every cancer patient should be entitled to, from access to promising new innovations, expert clinicians specializing in various cancer types, and advances in personalized, precision cancer treatments.

SUMMARY

SB 987, the California Cancer Care Equity Act, will improve cancer care access, cancer care outcomes (i.e., survival), and patient experience by enhancing Medi-Cal patient access, by way of requesting a referral, to necessary clinical expertise and resources at a NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers, a NCI Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP), or qualifying academic cancer center.

The bill parallels the current Medi-Cal coverage model that allows Medi-Cal beneficiaries to have access to certain life-saving care services at a Center of Excellence, even if that center is not included in the member's provider network.

Specifically, SB 987 expands the existing set of care diagnoses for which such enhanced access is provided and includes clinically necessary cancer care services such as genomic/genetic/transcriptomic/proteomic testing, clinical trials participation, and all necessary cancer-related outpatient and inpatient clinical care, defined episode of care.

SUPPORT

American Cancer Society/Cancer Action Network (Co-Sponsor)
City of Hope (Co-Sponsor)
Biocom California
California Life Sciences
California Chronic Care Coalition
California Hawaii NAACP
Latino cancer Institute
Lazarex Cancer Foundation
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
National Marrow Donor Program/Be The Match
North Bay Cancer Alliance
Susan G. Komen
Triage Cancer
West Center on Law & Poverty



OPPOSITION

California Association of Health Plans
Local Health Plans of California

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