2014 State Legislative Priorities

Cancer has become one of the most preventable and increasingly curable life-threatening diseases – but only if we take the steps necessary to prevent it outright, detect it early, and improve access to care. To this end, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) in Connecticut is working on the following legislative priorities in support of our mission to end cancer as a major health problem.

State Budget

While improving, the Connecticut state budget continues to show troubling signs and there are significant deficits projected for upcoming years. ACS CAN will vigilantly continue to protect and preserve existing funding for Medicaid coverage of tobacco cessation services, programs to help children stay away from tobacco, the state Quitline, cancer screening programs and the Connecticut Cancer Plan.

Lung Cancer and Tobacco Control

Helping to Reduce Tobacco Use: Smoking rates have dropped by more than 50% nationally and in Connecticut since the landmark 1964 Surgeon General’s report linked tobacco use and cancer. However, tobacco use remains a leading cause of death in Connecticut with 2770 deaths annually and $1.63 billion in health care costs each year. We will continue to work towards 100% smoke free air by supporting efforts to give towns and cities more control, strengthening access laws and restoring funding for tobacco use prevention and cessation programs.

Restore Funding to the Tobacco Control Programs: We strongly opposed additional provisions within the FY14 state budget that further weakened already underfunded state tobacco control efforts. These provisions redirect millions from the Tobacco Trust fund and cut the amount that can be spent on prevention and cessation programs for three years. We support restoring these funds for FY ’15.

Improving Quality of Life

Palliative Care Education and Resources: In 2013, ACS CAN helped pass legislation to create a Palliative Care Advisory Council, taking a first step toward improved coordination, education and availability of palliative care for anyone at anytime during the course of a serious or chronic illness. We will build on that success by continuing to expand education and access to resources on palliative care through the Department of Public Health through the development of a Palliative Care Consumer and Professional Information and Education Web Page.
Expanding Cancer Prevention, Treatment and Survivorship

**Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Funding:** Despite significantly increasing access to coverage and screenings, the Affordable Care Act still leaves some gaps that will affect thousands of women without access to life saving cancer screenings. The state Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection (BCCEDP) program is often the only option available for breast and cervical screenings for underserved and uninsured women. The BCCEDP was essentially flat funded for FY ’14-’15. ACS CAN will advocate for increased funding to ensure 2/6/2014 that no woman is without these life saving screenings.

**Ensuring Access to Quality Care and Implementation of the Affordable Care Act**

**Affordable Care Act:** The Affordable Care Act contains key provisions that are already meaningfully improving the health care system for people touched by cancer. Much of the ACA was dependent upon state enactment of the legislation’s provisions culminating in full enactment on January 1 of this year and as with any major change, there are bound to be some challenges. ACS CAN will continue to work with state officials and other stakeholders to monitor implementation and ensure cancer patients and survivors have full access to adequate and affordable health care coverage.

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ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit acscan.org

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