



American Cancer Society
Cancer Action Network
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September 13, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
Co-chair
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Co-chair
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Murray, Representative Hensarling, and Members of the Joint Select Committee:

As the representative of millions of cancer patients and survivors throughout the United States, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) urges the Joint Select Committee to continue supporting the federal government's efforts against cancer. Cancer kills more than 1,500 Americans every day – over 570,000 each year. It strikes one in every two men and one in every three women – our parents, our children, our friends and loved ones. In this era of budget priority-setting, the fight against this dreaded disease must remain a national priority.

As a nation we have made strong progress against cancer thanks in large part to the research and prevention activities supported by the federal government. Past bipartisan support for these efforts has resulted in reduced rates of death from the disease and corresponding increases in cancer survivorship such that we now have eleven million survivors living among us.

Advances in genomic research have given scientists an understanding of why different cancers occur, leading to new discoveries about how to turn off the genes that control tumor growth. Real breakthroughs are taking place thanks to the scientific advances made possible and supported by American taxpayers. Further progress is dependent upon federal leadership and financial support.

As a nation we can avoid at least half of all cancer deaths through better prevention and early detection and access to health care. Prevention by itself has the potential to transform our health system in new and innovative ways that will lead to a healthier population and lower health care costs. We urge full funding of the Prevention and Public Health Fund because we know that through tobacco control, better diet and exercise and access to early detection and treatment we can save hundreds of thousands of lives every year.

The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP), which has provided mammograms and Pap tests to more than three million women, and detected more than 47,000 cases of cancer, has also saved thousands of lives over the past 20 years. We urge you to expand it to cover all eligible women in need.

Approximately fifty percent of all cancer patients are served by either Medicare or Medicaid. These individuals are generally our oldest, least healthy and most vulnerable citizens, and they have no alternative way of accessing affordable medical care. The viability of these programs needs to be protected barring a better alternative so that all Americans have full access to the care they need.

Finally, we urge full funding of the patient reforms and health care affordability provisions enacted in 2010, which when fully implemented in 2014 will guarantee that 95 percent of Americans have access to adequate and affordable health insurance coverage. Without such coverage, cancer will bankrupt over a quarter of all families with the disease, and many people will suffer and die needlessly due to the lack of adequate health care.

We know there will be cuts in spending. But when it comes to deciding what is important, we hope you will agree that a full scale effort against cancer, a disease that kills more than a half a million Americans every year, should be priority number one. For cancer patients it's a matter of life or death, and we thank you for understanding the urgency of the fight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher W. Hansen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Christopher W. Hansen
President