

Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act, H.R. 3119



Sponsors: Congressman Eliot Engel (D-NY-16) & Congressman Tom Reed (R-NY-23)

Background:

Palliative care improves quality, controls cost, and enhances patient and family satisfaction for the rapidly expanding population of individuals with serious or life-threatening illness. In 2000, less than one-quarter of U.S. hospitals had a palliative care program, compared with nearly three-quarters in 2013. This growth comes in response to the increasing numbers and needs of Americans living with serious, complex and chronic illnesses and the realities of the care responsibilities faced by their families. Palliative care is a relatively new medical specialty, and more must be done to ensure patients and providers understand the benefits of palliative care and that an adequate palliative care workforce is available to provide the comprehensive symptom management, intensive communication and level of coordination of care that addresses the episodic and long-term nature of serious, chronic illness.

Bill Summary:

- **Palliative Care and Hospice Education Centers:** Establishes Palliative Care and Hospice Education Centers to improve the training of interdisciplinary health professionals in palliative care and provides students with clinical training in appropriate sites of care; and provide traineeships for advanced practice nursing.
- **Workforce Development:** Establishes fellowship programs within the new Palliative Care and Hospice Education Centers to provide short-term intensive courses focused on palliative care. Supporting the team approach to palliative care, the fellowships will provide supplemental training for faculty members in medical schools and other health profession schools, including pharmacy, nursing, social work, chaplaincy and other allied health disciplines in an accredited health professions school or program so providers who do not have formal training in palliative care can upgrade their knowledge and skills for the care of patients.
- **Nurse Training:** Creates special preferences in existing nurse education law for hospices and palliative nursing, in education, practice and quality grants, workforce development and nurse retention projects.
- **Palliative Care Education and Awareness:** Provides for the establishment of a national campaign to inform patients, families and health professionals about the benefits of palliative care and the services that are available to support patients with serious or life-threatening illnesses. It also directs the dissemination of information, resources and materials about palliative care services to health professionals and the public in a variety of formats, in consultation with professional and patient stakeholders.
- **Enhanced Research:** Using existing authorities and funds, this bill directs the NIH to expand national research to improve the delivery of palliative care to patients with serious illnesses.