

Legislation introduced by the House Cancer Caucus will provide cancer patients the coverage they need for more treatment options

Washington, DC – On Wednesday, the Co-chairs of the House Cancer Caucus Reps. Steve Israel (D – NY), Sue Myrick (R – NC), and Lois Capps (D – CA) and co-sponsor Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy (D – Ohio) announced the introduction of the Access to Cancer Clinical Trials Act of 2009 (H.R. 716). The legislation would give more cancer patients a chance to take advantage of the latest cancer treatments by requiring insurance plans to provide coverage for clinical trials.

“This year, there will be more than 1.4 million new cases of cancer and more than a half a million cancer related deaths in the United States. Every patient should be able to fight cancer with the best and newest treatments. This bill gives cancer patients who are willing to participate in clinical trials the access they need to the best tools available to defeat cancer,” said Rep. Israel.

“Clinical trials are so critical for patients and for medical research, yet many patients find that their health insurance won’t cover the rest of their routine cancer treatment if they decide to enroll in clinical trials. This bill simply states that insurers must continue to pay for routine treatments-- that they would be paying for regardless-- if patients enroll in a clinical trial. We should be encouraging participation in clinical trials-- not discouraging it by removing coverage for routine care,” said Rep. Myrick.

“By ensuring health care coverage for cancer patients who participate in clinical trials, our bill provides two critical resources in the fight against cancer: access to quality care and hope,” said Rep. Capps.

“Giving patients access to the latest methods of cancer treatment will save lives and open avenues that would not be available without insurance companies covering these trials. Those that courageously face cancer should have every option available to them in the fight for their lives,” said Rep. Kilroy.

"The House Cancer Caucus’s bill would help increase patient access to clinical trials, which is a priority of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society on both the federal and state legislative levels," said George Dahlman, senior vice president, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Office of Public Policy. “The House Cancer Caucus has long been a champion for blood cancer patients and we applaud their effort to increase access to life-saving therapies for blood cancer patients with this bill."

According to the American Cancer Society, 1,500 new cancer patients are diagnosed daily and fewer than 5 percent of adults with cancer will ever participate in a clinical trial.

The Access to Cancer Clinical Trials Act of 2009 will amend the Public Health Service Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue Code to prohibit a group health plan from: (1) denying an eligible participant or beneficiary participation in clinical trials related to the treatment of cancer that are federally funded or conducted under an

investigational new drug application reviewed by the Food and Drug Administration; (2) denying (or limiting or imposing additional conditions on) the coverage of routine patient costs for items and services furnished in connection with such participation; or (3) discriminating against an individual on the basis of such participation. The legislation includes as routine patient costs all items and services provided in the clinical trial that are otherwise generally available to a qualified individual, with certain exceptions.

The Access to Clinical Cancer Trials Act mirrors legislation introduced in the 107th, 108th, 109th and 110th sessions of Congress.