

Bipartisan Bill Prevents Insurers from Denying Coverage of Clinical Trials Enrollees

Washington, DC 6/15/07—On Tuesday, Congresswoman Steve Israel (D-NY) was joined by Congresswoman Deborah Pryce (R-OH) and Congresswoman Lois Capps (D-CA) in introducing the Access to Cancer Clinical Trials Act (ACCTA), legislation to prevent health insurance companies from dropping the coverage of cancer patients who seek treatment in a cancer clinical trial. Israel, Pryce and Capps unveiled their legislation at a press conference Tuesday in Washington, and they were joined by a leading cancer researchers and cancer patients.

Clinical trials represent the final testing stage for medications, therapies and treatments before they are approved for widespread use, and are being performed by state-of-the art research hospitals and oncology centers all across the U.S. Before reaching the clinical trial stage, a cancer treatment or drug has already been analyzed and scrutinized for six years on average, and typically has an additional eight years of study in the clinical trials phase. Yet, despite the prospects for improved health or recovery, very few cancer patients enroll in clinical trials, having been told by their insurance company that it will no longer cover the costs associated with their routine care.

“Cancer is a devastating disease, and we need to broaden treatment options so that patients have access to the most cutting-edge research available,” Israel said. “In our fight against terrorism, we will pay any price and deploy any weapon to beat our enemies. In any patient’s fight against the personal terror of cancer, we can do no less.”

“According to the American Cancer Society, about 1.4 million people will be diagnosed this year with cancer,” said Pryce. “Last year, however, only 36,000 – a measly 3% -- of those patients enrolled in a clinical trial, fearing that their insurer will drop them from coverage. Often, the patients' only hope rests in a clinical trial, and this bill will allow them to focus their energies on beating this dreaded disease -- not dealing with the red tape of insurance companies.”

“This legislation is an important part of our country’s comprehensive approach to fighting and winning the war on cancer,” said Capps, a nurse and Member of the Health Subcommittee. “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.”