

June 4, 2013

The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver, II
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Spencer Bachus, III
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cleaver and Representative Bachus:

The undersigned organizations express our support for the **Patient Centered Quality Care for Life Act, H.R. 1666**. This legislation will make a difference in the lives of millions of patients living with serious illness and their caregivers by providing patients with greater access to palliative care.

Approximately ninety million Americans are currently living with serious illness, and this number is expected to double over the next twenty-five years. Although the United States has the highest per-capita spending on health care in the world, many people living with a serious illness experience inadequately treated pain and symptoms, fragmented care, poor communication with their doctors and enormous strains on their family caregivers.

Palliative care is an interdisciplinary model of care focused on relief of the pain, stress and other debilitating symptoms of serious illness, such as cancer, cardiac disease, respiratory disease, kidney failure, Alzheimer's, AIDS, ALS, and MS. Its goal is to relieve suffering and provide the best possible quality of life for patients and their families. Palliative care can be offered simultaneously with life-prolonging and curative therapies for persons living with serious, complex, and eventually terminal illness and includes hospice care. By its very nature, palliative care is patient-centered care — translating patient goals to appropriate treatments.

While there has been considerable growth in the number of palliative care programs across the United States, barriers in three key areas – workforce, research and access – currently prevent full availability of palliative care for all patients and families facing serious or life-threatening illness. H.R. 1666 would begin to mitigate those barriers with new efforts in research, professional development and outreach.

Recent evidence-based studies have demonstrated that high-quality palliative care not only improves quality of life and patient and family satisfaction but can also prolong survival, while achieving these outcomes at a lower cost. H.R. 1666 would enable new research into the potential of expanded palliative care to improve patient quality of care at lower cost nationwide.

Health care providers today lack training in patient-centered palliative care. Students graduating from medical school and other allied health professionals often have little specific training in the core precepts of pain and symptom management, advance care planning, communication skills, and care coordination for patients with serious or life-threatening illness. H.R. 1666 would establish a new workforce training initiative to ensure sufficient numbers of health professionals at all levels to directly provide high-quality palliative care for the highest risk and most complex patients.

Thank you again for your support and leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you toward the passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM)
American Academy of Pain Management
American Childhood Cancer Organization
American Osteopathic Association (AOA)
American Society for Pain Management Nursing (ASPMN)
American Society of Clinical Oncology
Association of Oncology Social Work
Cancer Support Community (CSC)
C-Change
Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC)
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA)
LIVESTRONG Foundation
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Coalition for Cancer Research (NCCR)
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)
National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC)
Oncology Nursing Society
Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care
Supportive Care Coalition
The Catholic Health Association of the United States