



Statement in Support of SB 142/HB 272

The National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) serves as a voice for patients across America in regard to legislation and regulation that will benefit patient rights and needs. Our sister organization, Patient Advocate Foundation, provides direct assistance to patients throughout the country by helping to eliminate obstacles for patients trying to access quality healthcare. On behalf of these organizations as well as Alaska patients living with cancer, we stand in support of SB 142 and HB 272, legislation that will provide real protections for people in need of coverage for their cancer treatment.

These bills will protect patients who need oral anti-cancer medications, but are covered under an insurance plan that only provides for intravenous medications. By securing parity between the two types of anti-cancer treatments, Alaska will take a much-needed step toward ensuring that patients have access to the appropriate treatments that their physicians have prescribed for them. To date, 40 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws that make orally administered anti-cancer medications more affordable.

Patients who are in critical need of oral anti-cancer medication face prescription policies that often require them to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket each month, exhausting their financial resources and forcing difficult decisions about continuing treatment. Two thirds of the families that contact our organization for assistance have a household income of less than \$23,000 per year. Maintaining high co-pays for oral anti-cancer medication will lock out a segment of Alaska cancer patients who are in desperate need of care and will be put in the position of having to forgo treatment due to cost.

Intravenous chemotherapy has been the traditional treatment option for cancer patients, but innovation has opened new avenues for cancer care. Nearly 30 percent of new anti-cancer therapies in the research pipeline are oral products; however, they are not always covered at the same rate as their intravenous counterparts. Oral anti-cancer medications can provide patients a higher quality of life, often causing fewer side effects and a greater ease of delivery as well as potentially reducing in-patient treatment time and lowering costs related to mobility, child care, and transportation for those who are not easily able to access a proper treatment facility.

NPAF's mission is to serve as the voice and advocate for all patients battling illnesses, particularly those who often do not have the strength or resources to champion their own cause. SB 142 and HB 272 would make it easier for patients to afford oral anti-cancer medications, and would also provide patients across the state with a higher quality of life. NPAF applauds Senator Cathy Geissel and Representative Dan Saddler for introducing such important patient legislation and we look forward to working with this legislature to ensure that cancer treatments remain accessible to all residents of Alaska.

For more information on the National Patient Advocate Foundation's position on oral parity, please contact Melissa.Williams@npaf.org