

COA Applauds Bipartisan E&C Support for H.R. 5526, Urges Full House Passage and Senate Action

Patient Empowerment Bill "Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act" to Address Oral Drug Delivery Passes Out of Markup in Full Energy and Commerce Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES, June 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Community Oncology Alliance (COA) loudly applauds the United States House Committee on Energy and Commerce for their bipartisan markup and unanimous 43-0 passage of H.R. 5526, the Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act of 2024. Now we urge House leadership and the Senate to continue momentum on fixing this important issue for patients.



Community Oncology Alliance Logo

COA is particularly grateful to Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA-5) and Ranking Member Rep. Frank Pallone (R-NJ-6) for their commitment to resolving this critical issue that significantly impacts patients with cancer. COA also thanks Representatives Diana Harshbarger (R-TN-1) and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL-25) for originally introducing H.R. 5526. The commitment of these Congressional champions and their staff to resolving this critical issue will significantly benefit patients with cancer and other serious diseases.

"Thanks to the bipartisan leadership of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, we are one step closer to ensuring that no patient is left behind due to this misinterpreted regulation," said Ted Okon, executive director of COA. "This is a huge victory for seniors across America who face daily challenges in accessing their medications. We are grateful to the committee's leaders and its members for their commitment to this cause. Now the Senate and full Congress must act as soon as possible to make this legislation a reality for patients."



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Ted Okon

H.R. 5526 is needed because, last year, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) wrongly re-interpreted the law to prohibit practices from delivering oral cancer medications via mail or other delivery services. The agency’s interpretation of the rule also prevents spouses, family members, or caregivers from picking up medications.

The result has been undue and unnecessary hardship on

patients already dealing with cancer and other serious diseases, forcing them to either travel to pick up their prescriptions or make use of unreliable pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) mail order specialty pharmacies. For patients in rural, underserved, or socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, CMS’ position has imposed a substantial and unnecessary burden to receiving accessing their treatments.

H.R. 5526 corrects this misinterpretation of the Stark Law that has disproportionately affected those most in need, ensuring that cancer care remains a patient-first priority. The progression of H.R. 5526 through the committee with strong bipartisan support underscores the universal recognition of its necessity and the urgent need for action to ensure patients with cancer and other serious diseases can receive their critically important treatments without barriers.

As COA applauds the Energy and Commerce committee for its decisive action, we now urge House leadership to pass this critical legislation as well as for the Senate to pass companion bill, S. 3458, introduced by Senators Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN). It is crucial that the full Congress acts to pass this legislation, ensuring that all patients, regardless of their location or condition, have unfettered access to the medications they critically need. The COA remains committed to supporting this important legislation as it moves forward, recognizing the profound impact it will have on improving access to cancer treatments and reducing the burden on those fighting this devastating disease.

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About the Community Oncology Alliance

The Community Oncology Alliance (COA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for community oncology practices and, most importantly, the patients they serve. COA is the only organization dedicated solely to community oncology where the majority of Americans with cancer are treated. The mission of COA is to ensure that patients with cancer receive quality, affordable, and accessible cancer care in their own communities. More than 1.5 million people in the United States are diagnosed with cancer each year and deaths from the disease have been steadily declining due to earlier detection, diagnosis, and treatment. Learn more about COA at www.communityoncology.org.

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