



May 6, 2019

2019

President

Roy Silverstein, MD
Medical College of Wisconsin
Clinical Cancer Center
9200 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53228
Phone 414-805-0518

President-Elect

Stephanie Lee, MD, MPH
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
1100 Fairview Avenue N, D5-290
PO Box 19024
Seattle, WA 98109
Phone 206-687-5160

Vice President

Martin Tallman, MD
Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center
1275 York Avenue
Howard Building 718
New York, NY 10085
Phone 212-639-3842

Secretary

Robert Brodsky, MD
Johns Hopkins University
Ross Building, Room 1025
720 Rutland Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21205
Phone 410-502-2546

Treasurer

Mark Crowther, MD
McMaster University
50 Charlton Avenue East
Room L-901
Hamilton, ON L8N-4A6
Canada
Phone 1-905-521-6024

Councillors

Steven Allen, MD
Belinda Avalos, MD
John Byrd, MD
Cynthia Dunbar, MD
Arnold Ganser, MD
Agnes Lee, MD, MSC, FRCPC
Joseph Mikhael, MD, FRCPC, Med
Jane Winter, MD

Executive Director

Martha Liggett, Esq.

Deputy Executive Director

Matthew Gertzog, MBA, FASAE

The Honorable Tina Smith
United States Senate
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Murphy
United States Senate
136 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Jerry Moran
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
United States Senate
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Smith, Moran, Murphy, and Wicker:

On behalf of the American Society of Hematology (ASH), which represents more than 17,000 clinicians and scientists committed to the study and treatment of blood and blood-related diseases, including blood cancers such as leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma, I am writing to extend the Society's sincere appreciation for your leadership in introducing the Cancer Drug Parity Act (S. 741) in the 116th Congress. ASH remains committed to removing barriers to care and this bill would positively impact the thousands of patients treated by the Society's members across America. We are pleased to inform you that several of ASH's members were recently on Capitol Hill advocating for this important legislation.

As you are aware, the field of cancer treatment is rapidly changing resulting from years of exciting research and innovation funded in part by the National Institutes of Health. Oral or patient-administered chemotherapy is now more prevalent and has become the standard of care for many types of blood cancer. These therapies also account for approximately 25 to 35 percent of the oncology drug development pipeline. More importantly, many oral or patient-administered anti-cancer medications do not have intravenous (IV) or injected alternatives, so these oral agents are the only treatment option for some blood cancer patients.

While the innovations are truly practice changing, the Society remains quite concerned that patients may not be able to access these new anti-cancer treatments because of high co-payments that can amount to hundreds or thousands of out-of-pocket dollars per month. Consequently, almost 10% of patients choose not to fill their initial prescriptions for these anti-cancer medications even at the risk of a treatment failure for their cancer. As these medications become more prevalent in cancer treatment, they must be as affordable to patients as their IV counterparts.

We are pleased to see that S. 741 requires health plans offering IV chemotherapy benefits for plan subscribers to provide the same level of coverage for orally administered and self-injectable anti-cancer chemotherapy medications, greatly reducing the financial burden that patients fighting cancer currently face. While this legislation will not solve the problem of high drug prices, it will certainly help lower the high out-of-pocket cost burden experienced by the patients we serve.

ASH Letter to Senators Smith, Moran, Murphy, and Wicker
May 6, 2019
Page 2

Again, thank you for your leadership on this important access-to-care issue. Please do not hesitate to contact ASH Senior Manager, Legislative Advocacy Tracy Roades (202-776-0544 or troades@hematology.org) or ASH Government Relations Coordinator Foster Curry (202-776-0544 or fcurry@hematology.org) if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roy L. Silverstein".

Roy L. Silverstein, MD
President