

**To: Committee on Health Care and Human Services
Memorandum in Support – SB 1565**

Thank you to the chair and members of the committee. My name is Thea Zajac, and I am the director of State Government Affairs for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. I'm here today to ask for your support of SB 1565.

LLS represents blood cancer patients whose wide range of complex diseases are not able to be prevented or screened for. Every day treatments for blood cancers are being discovered and better understood. Cancer treatment is evolving from a world where there were limited options to treat an immense variety of diseases towards a world where precision medicine and targeted therapies can pinpoint the specific type of treatment that is best for each individual patient.

One of the greatest success stories we share nationally is one that took place here in Oregon at the Oregon Health and Sciences University where Dr. Brian Druker helped create what is now one of the frontline treatments for Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia (CML). This treatment was able to help patients like Judy. Judy was diagnosed with CML in 1998 and was told she had 3-5 years to live with intense chemotherapy. After several rounds of chemo, Judy was very sick and found out that the treatment wasn't affecting her cancer. She made plans to spread her ashes on Mt. Hood.

When Judy found out about the clinical trial for Dr. Druker's new CML treatment she signed up even though she was very sick and was told she only had months to live. It was her only chance. The treatment worked and Judy is still alive today, she lives in Lake Oswego, OR and continues to take a pill every day that keeps her in remission.

I tell this story because CML is just one of many diseases. Dr. Druker is working today on finding better treatments for another type of Leukemia, Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML) that has a poor prognosis for those who are diagnosed. Supporting this bill will enable the future Judy's to gain timely access to new and innovative therapies even when they are very sick and told they have no other options.

Coverage can no longer be based on criteria that quantify disease progression and level of physical ability. These types of coverage requirements fail to take into account other significant endpoints and the likelihood of an individual patient responding favorably to a particular treatment based on considerations that are unique to a specific individual with a given diagnosis.

LLS strives to ensure that treatment decisions remain with patients and their healthcare providers. As the cancer treatment landscape continues to change and adapt to innovative new research and therapies, it is of the utmost importance that policy guidelines encourage patients with the greatest medical needs to have sustainable, affordable access to the most appropriate therapies. This includes the ability to access coverage that does not discriminate against patients because of age, expected length of life, present or predicted disability, degree of medical dependency or quality of life.



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The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society strongly urges you to support SB 1539 which will provide the future Judy's of the world with access to quality care without the threat of discrimination.

For further questions, please contact:

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