

Cancer Patients Bill of Rights Establishes These Six Principles

Advocates praise California lawmakers for passing the nation's first Cancer Patients Bill of Rights.

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DUARTE, Calif. - [Cancer Care Is Different](#), a coalition-based campaign effort to improve patient access to advanced cancer care in California, applauds the state Assembly's unanimous passage of the [Cancer Patients Bill of Rights](#) (Senate Concurrent Resolution 11) August 19, joining the state Senate in adopting this resolution. The Cancer Patients Bill of Rights, which is the first of its kind in the nation, calls for six rights that every cancer patient in California should have from the moment of diagnosis to ensure they have access to the care that they need.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [lists](#) cancer as the second-leading cause of death in California. Thanks to extraordinary medical breakthroughs, a cancer diagnosis is no longer a death sentence for many patients. But too many Californians cannot benefit from these lifesaving treatments due to one-size-fits-all policies that prevent access to the cancer care they deserve. Cancer patients in California should not be divided between the "haves" and "have nots" based on the type of health insurance they have: Every patient should have access to the appropriate treatment and care their diagnosis calls for in order to save lives and deliver the best possible health outcomes for cancer patients.

Ensuring access to promising new innovations, experts specializing in various cancer types, and advances in personalized, precision cancer treatments, are all critical components in improving outcomes and saving lives. The Cancer Patients Bill of Rights outlines six key principles, proclaiming that cancer patients have a right to:

- Understand fully their diagnoses and be informed about treatment options in culturally appropriate and understandable languages
- Transparent and timely processes that ensure access to contracting oncology specialists, diagnostic testing and accurate interpretations of those tests

- Contracting cancer subspecialists who have expertise in the treatment of their subtypes of cancers when complex decisions are needed
- Medical treatments for pain management and other services that support their overall health
- Contracting National Cancer Institute–designated comprehensive cancer centers and leading academic medical centers for the management of complex cancers that require multiple experts or high-risk or emerging therapies
- Relevant clinical trials, medical research and cutting-edge innovation, including evidence-supported precision medicine

Sen. Susan Rubio (D-District 22) authored the California Cancer Patients Bill of Rights and championed the resolution.

“Cancer patients need appropriate, timely and equitable access to expert care,” Sen. Susan Rubio said. “That’s why it was important for the Legislature to vote for and pass the California Cancer Patients Bill of Rights. There have been remarkable advances in science creating more effective treatments and cures, and it’s unconscionable that people, particularly those most vulnerable and in disadvantaged communities, suffer from a lack of access to these saving medications. I am proud to be part of the work needed to address these barriers to access and help build a healthier California.”

Leaders of the Cancer Care Is Different initiative celebrate this important milestone in advancing patient access to lifesaving cancer care:

City of Hope

“We applaud the adoption of this Bill of Rights resolution as a first step toward addressing the gaps in access to specialty care that affect the more than 187,000 Californians diagnosed with cancer every year, particularly among underserved communities. City of Hope is proud to have driven this effort to build support for the rights of cancer patients and is grateful that the California State Legislature recognizes a fundamental fact: Because cancer care is different, cancer patients deserve these rights. We thank Senator Susan Rubio, Assembly Member Jim Wood and all the California legislators who championed the resolution.”

—Robert Stone, City of Hope President and CEO, the Helen and Morgan Chu Chief Executive Officer Distinguished Chair

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

“The Cancer Patients Bill of Rights stands as a bold statement of what every patient with cancer deserves – a full understanding of treatment options in culturally appropriate and understandable language, timely access to cancer subspecialists, and access to clinical trials and innovative treatments. We appreciate the California State Legislature for supporting cancer patients throughout the state.”

—Autumn J. Ogden-Smith, ACS CAN California State Legislative Director

California Chronic Care Coalition

“The Cancer Patients Bill of Rights raises critical awareness about the adverse patient impact caused by restricted access to specialized care and innovative treatments. On behalf of our alliance of consumers and providers, we commend our California policymakers for taking this important stand for cancer patients and doing what is right.”

—Elizabeth Helms, President and CEO of the California Chronic Care Coalition

International Myeloma Foundation

“We are thrilled that patients with myeloma across California will benefit from the state’s renewed commitment to accessible cancer care. The Cancer Patients Bill of Rights acknowledges the complexities and constantly evolving standard of cancer care for patients with cancers like myeloma, and we look forward to continuing to work to ensure patients have access to treatments that deliver the best outcomes.”

—Robin Levy, IMF Senior Director, Public Policy & Advocacy

Coalition members are not alone in their support for greater access. According to a September 2020 survey conducted by Public Policy Polling, 82% of Californians believe it is very important for people with cancer to have access to specialized expertise or treatment regardless of their insurance plan limitations.

Additionally, several other community stakeholders across California have voiced support for the Cancer Patients Bill of Rights:

Glendale Chamber of Commerce

“The Cancer Patients Bill of Rights is an important step in bridging the gaps among our residents who are seeking high quality cancer care. We applaud the passage by both chambers of the State Legislature.”

—Judee Kendall, President and CEO

San Gabriel Valley Civic Alliance

“The Alliance thanks the California State Legislature for helping ensure access to cutting-edge treatments and clinical trials for at-risk citizens in San Gabriel Valley and throughout California.”

—Edward J. Rendon, Executive Director

Monrovia Chamber of Commerce

“The Monrovia Chamber of Commerce is proud to see SCR 11 passed by the Assembly as a commitment to ensure equitable, accessible cancer care for all. Remarkable advances in cancer science will continue to radically improve the lives of Californians, and this Bill of Rights will ensure patients can access these innovations.”

—Sari Canales, Executive Director

Cancer Care Is Different would like to express gratitude to California Life Sciences, Cedars-Sinai and the Medical Oncology Association of Southern California, Inc., for supporting the passage of SCR 11. Cancer Care Is Different stands ready to work with stakeholders to improve access and care delivery for all Californians with cancer. More information about the Cancer Patients Bill of Rights along with other resources and patient stories can be found at cancercarediff.org.

[This announcement](#) was originally published on the City of Hope website.

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