

Landmark Cancer Care Access Bill Becomes Law in California

Starting January 1, 2023, more Californians will have access to cancer care and services, such as genome testing and clinical trials.

November 1, 2022 By City of Hope

The [Cancer Care Is Different](#) (CCID) Coalition commends Gov. Gavin Newsom for signing on September 28 the [California Cancer Care Equity Act \(SB 987\)](#), a bill that will expand access to specialized cancer care for Medi-Cal patients who receive a complex cancer diagnosis. The bill was introduced by Sen. Anthony Portantino (SD-25) in April and passed by both chambers of the California Legislature unanimously. SB 987 represents a critical first step in delivering on the promise of the [California Cancer Patients Bill of Rights](#) resolution adopted by the Legislature in 2021.

The California Cancer Care Equity Act (CCCEA) takes effect January 1, 2023, enabling the most vulnerable populations of California to seek optimal cancer care services more easily, such as genomic testing, precision medicine-based care, subspecialty expertise and clinical trials.

“This legislation will make optimal cancer care available to more patients and families in California,” said Robert Stone, CEO of City of Hope and the Helen and Morgan Chu Chief Executive Officer Distinguished Chair. “Governor Newsom is showing the nation how we create a more equitable cancer ecosystem that works better for patients and expands access to lifesaving, leading-edge treatments for those from historically underserved communities. On behalf of cancer patients and their families, we are grateful for Senator Portantino’s leadership on this legislation and look forward to exploring additional solutions to removing unnecessary barriers that keep cancer patients from achieving improved health outcomes.”

The CCCEA will help remove barriers that prevent access to leading-edge care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries — who represent approximately [one-third of California’s population](#). At present, patients [on Medi-Cal](#) experience less favorable five-year survival rates for several cancer types compared to patients on private insurance. Notably, African Americans and Hispanics have the highest rates of Medi-Cal enrollment in California at 44.3% and 44.9%, respectively.

“I am pleased that California will make access to leading-edge cancer treatments available for Medi-Cal patients a reality,” said the bill’s author, Senator Anthony Portantino (SD-25). “While there’s more we need to fix in our current delivery system to get the latest innovations to patients

equitably or quickly, this is a huge win for patients that will lay the groundwork for additional reforms in the future. With California home to the most prominent and effective research hospitals in the world, we need to make sure that their efforts reach as many people as possible.”

In 2022, an estimated 189,000 Californians will receive a cancer diagnosis from their physician. In an age when new treatments like CAR T cell therapies are [improving health outcomes while demonstrating cost-effectiveness](#), legislation like the CCCEA has the potential to reduce system inefficiencies and drive higher-value care in the long term, simultaneously helping to save the lives of Californians and increasing access to the kind of cancer care any Californian would demand for a loved one fighting cancer.

The Cancer Care Is Different coalition is driven by the belief that the best chance of a cure for a patient is the first chance at a cure: Cancer outcomes uniquely rely on the accuracy and speed of initial diagnosis, choice of therapy and access to appropriate clinical trials. SB 987 is one major step that gives us hope that more Californians will be able to access the care that gives each the best chance to beat cancer, regardless of their insurance or zip code.

“Patients deserve to access specialized care appropriate for their individual cancer, including enrolling in clinical trials and innovative therapies without unnecessary and unfair barriers,” said Autumn J. Ogden-Smith, California legislative director of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. “With the enactment of the California Cancer Care Equity Act, more Medi-Cal patients with cancer will have access to the full range of medical options available for their cancer.”

“On behalf of the nearly 32,000 Californians expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer this year alone, we are thrilled with Gov. Newsom’s decision to sign the California Cancer Care Equity Act which will help deliver high-quality treatment and care to more Californians diagnosed with cancer,” said Molly Guthrie, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy for Susan G. Komen. “We are incredibly grateful to the state legislature for their overwhelming support of this bill and look forward to advocating for additional reforms to help ensure equitable access to care for underserved patients in California.”

“All patients deserve access to the treatment best suited to their needs — but historically, in California, they haven’t gotten that,” said Thea Zajac, California advocacy director for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. “This landmark reform will enable the healthcare system in California to better serve cancer patients and their families. Our organization is proud to support SB 987 as a crucial step to ensuring that all Californians with cancer can access the lifesaving treatment that’s right for them.”

About Cancer Care Is Different

[Cancer Care Is Different](#) is a coalition-based campaign effort focused on raising awareness of the need to improve cancer care delivery in California. Partners in this effort include [City of Hope](#),

[Cedars-Sinai](#), [American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network](#), [Susan G. Komen](#), [The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society](#), [National Marrow Donor Program/Be The Match](#), [California Chronic Care Coalition](#), [North Bay Cancer Alliance](#), [Lazarex Cancer Foundation](#), [Triage Cancer](#), [The Latino Cancer Institute](#), [California Black Health Network](#) and [Stanford Health Care](#).

The CCID Coalition's statement announcing support for SB 987 can be found [here](#). For more information on CCID, visit [CancerCareDiff.org](#).

About City of Hope

City of Hope's mission is to deliver the cures of tomorrow to the people who need them today. Founded in 1913, [City of Hope](#) has grown into one of the largest cancer research and treatment organizations in the U.S. and one of the leading research centers for diabetes and other life-threatening illnesses. As an independent, National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center, City of Hope brings a uniquely integrated model to patients, spanning cancer care, research and development, academics and training, and innovation initiatives. Research and technology developed at City of Hope has been the basis for [numerous breakthrough cancer medicines](#), as well as human synthetic insulin and monoclonal antibodies. A leader in [bone marrow transplantation](#) and immunotherapy, such as [CAR T cell therapy](#), City of Hope's personalized treatment protocols help advance cancer care throughout the world.

With a goal of expanding access to the latest discoveries and leading-edge care to more patients, families and communities, City of Hope's growing national system includes its main Los Angeles campus, a network of clinical care locations across Southern California, a new cancer center in Orange County, California, and [Cancer Treatment Centers of America](#). City of Hope's affiliated family of organizations includes [Translational Genomics Research Institute](#) and [AccessHope](#). For more information about City of Hope, follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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