

Testimony of

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Joint Committee on Public Health

Senate Bill 1177

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Thank you to the Co-chairs and the members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify. I am Lesa Lessard, Executive Director of the New England Coalition for Cancer Survivorship. I am here to testify on behalf of the Coalition in support of Senate Bill 1177, filed by Senator Tolman, legislation that would require oncologists to develop treatment summaries and care plans for patients completing active cancer treatment.

The New England Coalition for Cancer Survivorship exists to support and advocate for the needs of cancer survivors. Thanks to improved treatments, and an increased emphasis on early detection, the community of cancer survivors is growing each year. According to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Cancer Institute, nearly one in 20 adults in the US have survived cancer, including nearly one-fifth of all people over age 65. This is a 20% increase in the number of cancer survivors in just the past six years. Given the alternative, the growth in cancer survivorship is a trend we want to see continue. This legislation is one important avenue toward accomplishing that goal.

One reality that all cancer survivors live with is the risk of recurrence. Once you have been diagnosed with cancer, regardless of the course of treatment that is taken, the risk of the cancer coming back is statistically very real, and is constantly with you. This legislation addresses that reality in two important ways. By requiring the promulgation of regulations addressing the need for cancer survivorship plans, it ensures that survivors will have a full and complete record of their diagnosis and treatment, something that will be essential should future treatment be necessary.

In addition, the survivorship plans would provide the patient with recommendations for follow-up care, and future testing and monitoring, along with wellness resources, critical information that will empower the patient to reduce their risk of recurrence through careful monitoring, and prevention methods such as diet and exercise. Empowering survivors in this way will reduce the incidence of cancer recurrence, saving lives, avoiding human suffering, keeping families intact, and reducing costs in our health care system, a goal that we know is shared by this Committee.

Again, I want to thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify, and we urge you to report favorably on Senate Bill 1177.