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The Patient's Voice | since 1996

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February 5, 2009

State Senator Joe Bolkcom

Iowa Statehouse

Des Moines, IA 50319

Re: Senate File 21

Dear Senator Bolkcom:

On behalf of the patients we serve, National Patient Advocate Foundation is pleased to offer its strong support for Senate File 21. This legislation will ensure that patients enrolled in state-regulated health insurance programs will have coverage for routine care during an approved cancer clinical trial to the same extent as the policy provides coverage for any other sickness, injury, or disease.

National Patient Advocate Foundation (NPAF) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving access to healthcare services through policy reform. Our mission of creating avenues of patient access through improved access to, and reimbursement for, evolving therapies, therapeutic agents, and devices is influenced by the experience of patients who receive case management services from our companion organization, Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF). Last year, PAF received more than 9.5 million contacts from patients throughout the United States seeking assistance for access to care issues resulting from diagnoses of a chronic, debilitating or life-threatening disease. Of those 48,800 became full patient cases involving communications made by PAF staff on behalf of a patient in order to reach positive resolution.

From September 1, 2006 to September 1, 2007, PAF handled 3,172 patient cases related to clinical trials. For many patients, clinical trials are not even an option if they are faced with a cancer diagnosis because their insurance refuses to pay for the treatment. Additionally, patients may be faced with the burden of mounting co-pays for healthcare services related to their participation in a clinical trial. Senate File 21 is vital for cancer patients in Iowa who struggle to receive treatment and/or struggle to meet their financial responsibility. NPAF believes that the focus for an individual with a cancer diagnosis should be on their treatment and quality of life, not on coverage of services and escalating debt.

There are 10 million Americans living with cancer and another 1.5 million more who will be diagnosed with cancer this year. As the opportunities to enroll in clinical trials decrease due to funding cuts, coverage for routine costs associated with clinical trials is necessary in order to make scientific advances. In order to promote innovation, we need to do everything we can to encourage individuals to enroll in clinical trials and SF 21 provides an opportunity for many patients in Iowa to enroll in clinical trials that could save their lives. NPAF supports the principle that providing coverage and reimbursement for services are essential for developing new treatments for cancer.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of patients. We will continue to watch, with interest, the movement of this important legislation through the Iowa State Senate. In you have questions, or if we may provide you with additional information, please feel free to contact me or Kim Williams at 202-347-8009.

Respectfully Submitted,



Nancy Davenport-Ennis  
President & CEO