

January 24, 2019

The Honorable Eliot Engel
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Reed
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chair, Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member, Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Yvette D. Clarke
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Buddy Carter
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA)

Dear Representatives Engel, Reed, and Carter, Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, and Vice Chair Clarke:

The undersigned organizations write to express our support for H.R. 647, the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA). This bipartisan legislation will make a difference in the lives of millions of patients living with serious or life-threatening illness and their caregivers.

Despite a high intensity of medical treatment, many seriously ill individuals still experience troubling symptoms, unmet psychological and personal care needs, fragmented care, poor communication with their health care providers, and enormous strains on their family caregivers. However, numerous studies have shown that adding palliative care can improve pain and symptom control, quality of life, and patient and family satisfaction.

Palliative care is an interdisciplinary model of care focused on relief of the pain, stress and other debilitating symptoms of serious illness, such as cancer, cardiac disease, respiratory disease, kidney failure, Alzheimer's, AIDS, ALS, and MS. Its goal is to relieve suffering and provide the best possible quality of life for patients and their families. Palliative care can be offered simultaneously with life-prolonging and curative therapies for persons living with serious, complex, and eventually terminal illness and includes hospice care. By its very nature, palliative care is patient-centered care — translating patient goals to appropriate treatments.

We appreciate your leadership in recognizing the significant role palliative care and hospice can play in creating lasting change across the health care system. With PCHETA's focus on expanding the interdisciplinary palliative care workforce, promoting awareness of the benefits of palliative care among patient and providers, and improving the evidence base for this care, you have demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing key barriers to palliative care access for the growing number of Americans with serious or life-threatening illness.

Delivery of high-quality palliative care cannot take place without sufficient numbers of health care professionals with appropriate training and skills. Students graduating from medical, nursing or health care professional schools today have very little, if any, training in the core precepts of pain and symptom management, advance care planning, communication skills, and care coordination for patients with serious or life-threatening illness. Further, there is a large gap between the number of health care professionals with palliative care training and the number required to meet the needs of the expanding population of seriously ill patients. PCHETA would go a long way towards bridging this gap by establishing education centers and career incentive awards to improve the training of doctors, nurses, physician assistants, social workers and other health professionals in palliative care.

PCHETA also aims to strengthen clinical practice and improve health care delivery for patients living with serious or life-threatening illness, as well as their families, by directing funding toward palliative care research. Research funding for palliative care and pain and symptom management comprises less than 0.1 percent of the National Institutes of Health annual budget. PCHETA would direct an expansion and intensification of research in these important areas.

At the same time, more must be done to ensure patients and providers are aware of the benefits of palliative care. According to the Institute of Medicine, there is a “need for better understanding of the role of palliative care among both the public and professionals across the continuum of care.” PCHETA would direct the implementation of a national education and awareness campaign so that patients, families, and health professionals understand the essential role of palliative care in ensuring high-quality care for individuals facing serious or life-threatening illness.

Through your leadership last Congress, PCHETA passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bi-partisan support. We appreciate your continued support and dedication to this important issue. We look forward to working with you toward quick passage of this legislation in the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,

Academy of Integrative Pain Management
Alzheimer’s Association
Alzheimer’s Impact Movement
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative
Medicine
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Surgeons Commission on
Cancer
American Geriatrics Society
American Heart Association | American Stroke
Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychosocial Oncology Society
American Society of Clinical Oncology
Association of Oncology Social Work
Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology
Nurses
Association of Professional Chaplains
The California State University Institute for
Palliative Care
Cambia Health Solutions
Cancer Support Community
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Center to Advance Palliative Care
Children’s National Health System
Coalition for Compassionate Care of California
Colorectal Cancer Alliance
Courageous Parents Network
ElevatingHOME | Visiting Nurses Associations
of America

The Gary and Mary West Health Institute
The George Washington Institute for Spirituality
and Health
HealthCare Chaplaincy Network
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lung Cancer Alliance
Motion Picture & Television Fund
National Alliance for Caregiving
National Association for Home Care & Hospice
National Association of Social Workers
National Brain Tumor Society
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care
National Hospice and Palliative Care
Organization
National Palliative Care Research Center
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National POLST Paradigm
Oncology Nursing Society
Pediatric Palliative Care Coalition
Physician Assistants in Hospice and Palliative
Medicine
Prevent Cancer Foundation
ResolutionCare Network
Social Work Hospice & Palliative Care Network
Society of Palliative Care Pharmacists
St. Baldrick’s Foundation
Supportive Care Matters
Susan G. Komen
Supportive Care Coalition
Trinity Health

cc: House Committee on Energy and Commerce members