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Affordable Access to Oral Chemotherapy Bill Signed

MARCH 28TH 2014 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Submitted by
Dee Loflin, SMT Manager/Editor*

Missouri - Gov. Jay Nixon joined cancer patients, survivors and health care providers at Siteman Cancer Center in St. Louis to sign Senate Bill 668, which will increase the affordability and accessibility of oral chemotherapy medications.

“No Missourian battling cancer should have to break the bank in order to get the medicine they need,” Gov. Nixon said. “Passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, **Senate Bill 668** will make sure insurance companies provide affordable coverage for these lifesaving medications, regardless of how a patient chooses to take them. I appreciate the hard work by members of the General Assembly, including Representative Solon, Senator Silvey and others, to get this bill to my desk and bring more affordable cancer treatment options to Missourians.”

Oral anticancer medications provide patients with a simpler, more convenient and less invasive alternative to chemotherapy delivered intravenously because these pills can be taken at home, often with fewer side effects. Currently, most insurance companies cover these drugs as part of a prescription drug benefit, rather than a medical benefit. As a result, cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy pills have faced significantly higher out-of-pocket costs than those who take their drugs intravenously.

Senate Bill 668 addresses this disparity by preventing insurance companies from treating

out-of-pocket costs for chemotherapy pills differently than intravenous drugs. Health insurance companies can comply with the law by limiting the out-of-pocket costs they charge for anticancer medications taken orally to \$75 for a thirty-day supply.

“With more and more oral chemotherapy pills coming on the market, this legislation was needed to ensure insurance companies cover these medications in an equitable way,” said Sen. Ryan Silvey (R-Kansas City). “Senate Bill 668 will bring Missouri in line with the majority of other states that have taken this common sense step to make sure Missourians with insurance have access to the cancer treatment option that’s best for them.”

“This legislation is about putting decisions about cancer care in the hands of doctors and patients, rather than insurance companies,” said Rep. Sheila Solon (R-Blue Springs).

“Missourians struggling with cancer deserve the best, most effective treatment for their disease. I have been proud to work with my fellow legislators to get this common sense legislation passed, and I appreciate the Governor for signing it today.”

The bill, which is estimated to impact 1.6 million insured Missourians, received strong support from organizations including the American Cancer Society, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and the Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians.

“As The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and our partners in the community invest in research for cures, we want to ensure access to the best cancer treatments for every Missourian,” said **Debbie Kersting**, Executive Director of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society – Gateway Chapter. “We applaud Governor Nixon and members of the General Assembly for their strong support of this bill, which will put affordable, effective cancer treatment within reach for Missourians across the state.”

“As the nation’s largest voluntary health organization dedicated to improving cancer care, the American Cancer Society believes all cancer patients should have access to the broad range of therapies needed to combat their disease,” said Stacy Reliford, Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. “Oral chemotherapy is truly the wave of the future in cancer care and offers patients distinct advantages over traditional intravenous chemotherapy, including the fact that they are targeted therapies which attack only the cancer cells, leaving healthy cells alone. This lifesaving legislation will allow patients to use the most appropriate drug without being influenced by their out-of-pocket costs.”

An actuarial study commissioned by the legislature estimated that the legislation would have a negligible impact on insurance premiums.

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