

Pennsylvania Cancer Coalition

Policy Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

June 2, 2022

Attendees: (Microsoft Teams meeting)

Emma Watson (ACS), co-chair

Ruth Modzelewski (University of Pittsburgh/UPMC Cancer Institute), co-chair

Brenda Anastasio (PA Comprehensive Cancer Control and Prevention Program Director)

Nate Burden (Radon expert)

Stephanie Darwak

Mary Doherty (Leukemia & Lymphoma Society; Advocate)

Evelyn Gonzalez

Andrea Palashoff (Adagio Health)

Jen Pensinger

Alanna Rahm

Lyn Robertson (UPMC Hillman Cancer Center)

Eric Rothenmel

Karen Saunders

The meeting was called to order at 9:33am.

1. Emma provided a review of current Federal activities:

Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act

On May 19th the US Senate reintroduced the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA), which charges the federal government with expanding both the availability and scope of palliative care services across the country.

The bipartisan bill would increase federal research funding for palliative care, including pain and symptom management, and establish palliative care education and training programs for doctors, nurses and other health professionals. It would also create a national public education and awareness campaign to educate patients and providers about the availability and benefits of palliative care. You may remember the House of Representatives passed this bill last Congress and we are hopeful to see movement on it this year.

The Health Equity and Accountability Act (HEAA) of 2022:

On April 26th legislation was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to improve access to quality health care and decrease health disparities in communities of color. The Health Equity and Accountability Act (HEAA) of 2022 provides a comprehensive set of strategic policy solutions designed to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities, including those that strengthen health data collection to inform policies, improve diversity in the health care workforce, and expand and improve access to health care services.

The legislation also offers a path to increase the federal tobacco tax, including tax parity on other tobacco products like e-cigarettes, and improve access to cessation services and other lifesaving care in Medicaid and private health plans to reduce suffering and death from tobacco-related diseases like cancer. The bill also permanently lifts the cap on federal Medicaid spending in the U.S. Territories and brings federal matching rates in line with states – correcting a longstanding and unjust imbalance that left many limited-income individuals in the territories without access to lifesaving medical care.

The bill also includes provisions from the Diversifying Investigations Via Equitable Research Studies for Everyone (DIVERSE) Trials Act, which is bipartisan, bicameral legislation that aims to increase access to clinical trials and improve participation by communities that are traditionally underrepresented in them by removing barriers to costs from non-medical fees for patients.

HEAA and the DIVERSE Trials Act are strongly supported by the Congressional Tri-Caucuses which includes the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus.

2. Emma provided a review of current State activities:

Work Requirements

On the state level a bill was introduced by Senator Scott Martin on Medicaid Work Requirements. We will be monitoring that but anticipate it will not move at this point in time. There is also a work requirement bill in the House which is sponsored by Seth Grove.

Budget

We will likely have an upcoming opportunity to take action around the budget and advocating for tobacco control programs and the state breast and cervical cancer screening program. It is anticipated that the budget will be done early this year and will be completed by June 25th.

3. Also at the Federal Level, Eric Rothermel highlighted the:

Proposed Rules to Prohibit Menthol Flavoring in Cigarettes and All Flavors in Cigars:

The FDA released its proposed rules on April 28th to eliminate menthol cigarettes and eliminate all flavors in all cigars. Ending menthol flavoring in cigarettes is a long overdue step forward in reducing youth tobacco initiation and Big Tobacco's targeting of Black communities, who consistently report the highest prevalence of menthol cigarette use. Once finalized, this rule will also help combat the health disparities driven by Big Tobacco's premeditated predatory practices to addict Black, LGBTQ and low-income communities for decades.

Link to alert to take action:

<https://action.lung.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=8538>

4. Another "take action" step was highlighted by Stephanie Darwak and Jen Pennsinger on a call to action:

The PA Breast Cancer Coalition is working on new legislation sponsored by Senator Bob Mensch, which eliminates out-of-pocket costs of breast MRIs and ultrasounds for women at high-risk for breast cancer.

Under Senate Bill 1225, breast MRI and ultrasounds will be provided at no cost to women insured under PA law with high risk-factors including: a personal history of breast cancer, family history of breast cancer, genetic predisposition, dense breast tissue or prior radiation therapy. SB 1225 currently has 33 senate co-sponsors. To learn more and to take action, visit pbcc.me/MRIbill (also

<https://www.pabreastcancer.org/news-release-2/>).

5. Ruth mentioned that there is early planning by FASEB (Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology) to advocate for animal research at the federal level. It is early stages and any group or set of advocates who might be interested should contact Ruth at ram305@pitt.edu.

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 am.