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June 17, 2020

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Health
Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Burgess, MD
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Chairwoman Eshoo and Ranking Member Burgess,

The Association for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) applauds your efforts to address disparities in health care with this hearing, "Health Care Inequality: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in COVID-19 and the Health Care System."

ASCO is the national organization representing nearly 45,000 physician and other health care professionals specializing in cancer treatment, diagnosis, and prevention. We are committed to ensuring evidence-based practices for the treatment of cancer are available to all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic background. ASCO is dedicated to working with stakeholders to develop policies that guarantee equal access to quality health care, with special emphasis on reducing insurance and economic barriers to care.

The COVID-19 public health crisis has magnified existing disparities in our nation's health care system. The CLINICAL TREATMENT Act (H.R. 913) led by Committee members Representatives Ben Ray Lujan (NM-03) and Gus Bilirakis (FL-12), aims to reduce these disparities by requiring Medicaid to cover the routine care costs for patients with life-threatening conditions on clinical trials. Medicaid insures nearly one-fifth of the U.S. population and is the only major payor not required to provide this coverage for its enrollees. For patients with life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer, a treatment offered in a clinical trial may be their best or only remaining option. Moreover, the lack of participation in clinical trials from the Medicaid population means these patients are not reflected in the outcome of the clinical research, which diminishes our ability to accurately capture and reflect the populations of this country in our research results. Medicaid enrollment is on the rise and the financial impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis have only made the need to address this barrier to access more urgent.

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As you continue the critical work to solve the issues that cause health care disparities in this country, we respectfully request that you include the CLINICAL TREATMENT Act as part of that solution. Thank you again for your leadership on this issue. We stand ready and able to assist you as you. If you have any questions regarding health care disparities or other issues that impact patients with cancer, please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Schwartz at Amanda.Schwartz@asco.org.

Sincerely,



Monica M. Bertagnolli, MD, FACS, FASCO
Chair of the Board, Association for Clinical Oncology