



Testimony in support of HB 2031
Hilary Gee, Kansas Government Relations Director
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

March 9, 2017

Chairwoman Schmidt and members of the Committee:

The American Cancer Society Action Network (ACS CAN) appreciates the opportunity to offer our support for House Bill 2031. ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. As the nation's leading advocate for public policies that are helping to defeat cancer, ACS CAN ensures that cancer patients, survivors, and their families have a voice in public policy matters at all levels of government.

Quality of life is a problem for the thousands of Kansas families currently facing serious illnesses, like cancer. Advances in cancer research continue to provide new and more effective treatments for cancer, but therapies do not meet all the needs of cancer patients. In addition to treating the primary disease, patients also need treatment for other issues like fatigue, emotional distress or nausea. Palliative care is about treating the patient as well as the disease. It's a big shift in focus for health care delivery—and it works.

Palliative care is focused on providing the best possible quality of life for a patient and their family by offering relief from pain, stress and other symptoms of serious chronic illness. Patient and family-centered palliative care sees the person beyond the cancer treatment. It brings trained specialists together with doctors and nurses in a team-based approach to improve quality of life during serious illness, explain treatment options, and manage symptoms like pain, nausea, and fatigue. **Palliative care is appropriate during treatment, survivorship and beyond.**

While the benefits of palliative care are clear, there are barriers to Kansas families receiving this type of support. Just 48% of Kansas hospitals have palliative care teams. Among the smaller hospitals in our state that falls to just 24%.ⁱ

Lack of understanding about palliative care, both what it is and when it should be provided, remains one of the chief barriers preventing access to it. Most of the general public is not at all knowledgeable about palliative care – 70% of people when asked were completely unfamiliar with the services palliative care provides to patients. Additionally, despite the rising body of evidence showing its benefits, many professionals mistakenly equate palliative care with end of life and hospice care.ⁱⁱ

HB 2031 will address both of these challenges. The state advisory council on palliative care will bring together experts in palliative care to identify challenges to palliative care delivery and innovative solutions to address the needs of families across the state. The palliative care consumer and professional information program will help to maximize the effectiveness of palliative care in the state by ensuring that comprehensive and accurate information is available to the public, health care providers, and health care facilities. **Make today better for Kansans facing serious illnesses and support HB 2031.**

ⁱ Center to Advance Palliative Care 2015 State-by-State Report Card

ⁱⁱ Center to Advance Palliative Care: 2011 Public Opinion Research on Palliative Care: A Report Based on Research by Public Opinion Strategies. <http://www.capc.org/tools-forpalliative-care-programs/marketing/public-opinion-research/2011-public-opinionresearch-on-palliative-care.pdf>