

September 15, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: Request to address palliative care and hospice workforce in reconciliation**

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

The undersigned organizations write to express our enthusiastic support for Senator Tammy Baldwin's and Representative Yvette Clarke's request that the upcoming reconciliation package include efforts to grow, improve and sustain the palliative care and hospice workforce. We agree that the bipartisan *Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA)*, S. 2080/H.R. 647 in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, should be used as a model for such efforts.

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.

Palliative care and hospice can play a significant role in creating lasting change across the health care system. PCHETA would expand the interdisciplinary palliative care workforce, promote awareness of the benefits of palliative care among patient and providers, and improve the evidence base for this care.

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.

PCHETA enjoys strong bipartisan support. In the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.R. 647 had 295 cosponsors, and S. 2080 had 58 cosponsors. In addition, the bill is [supported](#) by more than 50 national organizations and 25 state organizations, including the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the Catholic Health Association of the United States, the Alzheimer's Association, the American Heart Association/ American Stroke Association, the American Geriatrics Society, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association, the Visiting Nurse Associations of America, the National Association of Social Workers, the National Hospice and Palliative Care, and others.

Thank you for your serious consideration of the request submitted by Senator Baldwin and Representative Clarke to invest in the palliative care and hospice workforce and to support this interprofessional, team-based approach to care.

Sincerely,

Alzheimer's Association  
Alzheimer's Impact Movement  
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative  
Medicine  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Heart Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Psychosocial Oncology Society  
Association for Clinical Oncology  
Association of Oncology Social Work  
Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology  
Nurses  
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 | VNAAmerica  
The George Washington Institute for Spirituality  
and Health  
GO<sub>2</sub>Foundation for Lung Cancer

Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association  
Leukemia & Lymphoma Society  
Motion Picture & Television Fund  
National Alliance for Caregiving  
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  
St. Baldrick's Foundation  
Social Work Hospice and Palliative Care Network  
Supportive Care Matters  
Susan G. Komen  
Trinity Health

cc: The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
The Honorable Yvette D. Clarke