

2021 Maine Legislative Priorities



Victory in the fight against cancer requires bold new public policies that promote prevention and early detection of cancer, increase research, and expand access to quality, affordable health care. Lawmakers make many decisions that impact the lives of Mainers touched by cancer and their leadership is vital to defeating this disease. In 2021, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) will work with the Maine Legislature in support of the following priorities:

Ensuring Access to Quality, Affordable Health Care

- **Access to Health Coverage through Medicaid:** ACS CAN will advocate for low-income individuals and families to have access to health care coverage through the MaineCare program. The downturn in the economy and associated loss of employment, wages and employer sponsored insurance for thousands of Mainers as a result of COVID-19 has resulted in increased program enrollment. We will work to preserve access to Medicaid for low-income Maine individuals and families, including advocating in support of adequate, sustainable funding.
- **Access to Adequate, Affordable Health Coverage:** ACS CAN will work to ensure that patients have health coverage that provides them adequate, affordable access to cancer preventive services, medications and providers they need. Reducing the cancer burden depends on access to meaningful health coverage. ACS CAN will work to advocate for policies that ensure all Mainers have quality, affordable health coverage. These efforts will include ensuring the voice of cancer patients is represented in regulatory proceedings as the state implements legislation passed by the 129th Maine Legislature related to standardized benefit plans and a state-based health insurance marketplace.

Reducing the Toll of Tobacco

- **Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Funding:** ACS CAN will work to protect funding for the state's tobacco prevention and cessation program. The funding for this program comes largely from revenues from the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) payments, which go into the Fund for a Healthy Maine. The other source of state funding for this program is a portion of the revenue the state collects from excise taxes on non-cigarette tobacco products. ACS CAN will advocate in support of maintaining the program's current funding level of \$13.9 million per year. Comprehensive, adequately funded tobacco control programs reduce tobacco use and tobacco-related disease, resulting in reduced tobacco-related health care costs.
- **Tobacco Prevention via Increased Prices of All Tobacco Products:** ACS CAN will advocate for increasing the price of all tobacco products, through increasing the cigarette excise tax by \$2.00 per pack, with an equivalent relative tax increase on all other tobacco products. Maine has not increased its cigarette excise tax in more than 15 years. Regular and significant increases in tobacco taxes can save lives, reduce health care costs and reduce the tax burden from smoking-caused government expenditures.
- **End the Sale of All Flavored Tobacco Products:** ACS CAN will work with public health and health care provider partners to advocate in support of legislation to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products without exception. Flavored tobacco is a known tobacco industry strategy used to attract new users, especially youth. More than 8 in 10 teens that have used tobacco products started with a flavored product. Use of flavored tobacco products to attract new users is not limited to youth but also communities that Big Tobacco has targeted, including African American and LGBTQ communities. As a result of industry targeting, both of these communities use menthol cigarettes at disproportionately high levels. To prevent youth and young adults from using tobacco products, and reduce tobacco-related health disparities, ACS CAN will advocate in support of ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products (including menthol cigarettes, as well as flavored cigars, e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco).
- **Tobacco-Free Workplaces and Public Places:** ACS CAN will defend against any attempts to weaken the state's tobacco-free workplaces and public places laws. In addition to reducing exposure to secondhand smoke, tobacco-free laws also encourage and increase tobacco use cessation among adults trying to quit, and reduce health care, cleaning and lost productivity costs.

Cancer Prevention and Early Detection

- **Comprehensive Cancer Prevention and Screening Programs:** ACS CAN will advocate to preserve funding for the *Maine Breast and Cervical Health Program*. This life-saving program provides breast and cervical cancer screenings to low income women age 40 – 64 who are uninsured or underinsured. ACS CAN will also work to explore opportunities to establish funding for colorectal cancer screening, treatment and patient navigation programs.
- **Obesity Prevention:** Working with partners like the American Heart Association and Maine Public Health Association, ACS CAN will work to identify and act on opportunities to implement policies that promote healthy eating and active lifestyles, including state appropriations for obesity prevention, requiring quality physical education and physical activity in schools, and school nutrition policies.

Improving Quality of Life for Patients and Survivors

- **Palliative Care:** ACS CAN will support the implementation of the Palliative Care and Quality of Life Interdisciplinary Advisory Council that brings together state palliative care and health care experts to increase awareness, availability, and utilization of palliative care services. Palliative care is specialized medical care that focuses on providing the best possible quality of life for patients diagnosed with serious illnesses, like cancer, and their families by offering relief from pain, stress and other symptoms associated with their illness.
- **Access to Pain Control:** ACS CAN will work with policymakers to ensure balance in pain relief policies that allows cancer patients and survivors the opportunity to access pain relief medications when needed while also curbing the abuse and diversion of these drugs.

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ACS CAN is making cancer a top priority for public officials and candidates at the federal, state, and local levels. ACS CAN empowers advocates across the country to make their voices heard and influence evidence-based public policy change as well as legislative and regulatory solutions that will reduce the cancer burden. As the American Cancer Society's nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, ACS CAN is critical to the fight for a world without cancer. For more information please visit www.fightcancer.org.

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