ASTRO opposes threats to coverage in draft Senate health care bill

ARLINGTON, Va., June 22, 2017—The Chair of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) David C. Beyer, MD, FASTRO, issued the following statement opposing Senate Republicans’ health care plan released today:

“ASTRO appreciates efforts by Congressional Republicans to provide Americans with access to affordable coverage; we clearly recognize that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has shortcomings. However, we are very concerned that the Senate Republican ‘Better Care Reconciliation Act’ released today would put too many cancer patients at too great a risk of losing access to the care they need and deserve.

While the Senate legislation includes stronger protections than the House-passed American Health Care Act (AHCA), we still believe the Senate bill falls short of ASTRO’s principles of health care reform. Specifically, the bill fails to protect patients by not ensuring coverage of essential health benefits, including radiation therapy, and makes drastic cuts to the critical Medicaid program. If the bill is passed as drafted, coverage would be lost for many of America’s 15 million cancer patients, including those who rely on safety net programs such as Medicaid and have gained coverage under the ACA. This loss would disrupt essential cancer care services and create undue financial burdens on patients facing the fight of their lives.

For many patients, coverage can be the difference between a cure and dying from cancer. Radiation oncologists nationwide report that recent coverage expansions have allowed for earlier cancer diagnosis and more effective treatment of many more Americans than in the past. We should accelerate these lifesaving advances, not step back.

ASTRO encourages Senators to vote against this bill and work together to address the serious issues facing cancer patients and to ensure all Americans have high quality health coverage.”

ASTRO also sent a letter outlining its opposition to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

ABOUT ASTRO

ASTRO is the premier radiation oncology society in the world, with more than 10,000 members who are physicians, nurses, biologists, physicists, radiation therapists, dosimetrists and other health care professionals who specialize in treating patients with radiation therapies. As the leading organization in radiation oncology, the Society is dedicated to improving patient care through professional education and training, support for clinical practice and health policy standards, advancement of science and research, and advocacy. ASTRO publishes three medical journals, International Journal of Radiation Oncology • Biology • Physics (www.redjournal.org), Practical Radiation Oncology (www.practicalradonc.org) and Advances in Radiation Oncology (www.advancesradonc.org); developed and maintains an extensive patient website, RT Answers (www.rtanswers.org); and created the Radiation Oncology Institute (www.roinstitute.org), a nonprofit foundation to support research and education efforts around the world that enhance and confirm the critical role of radiation therapy in improving cancer treatment. To learn more about ASTRO, visit www.astro.org.

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY

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