



**Testimony of Hilary Schneider, Maine Government Relations Director,  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network**

**In Opposition to LD 867 “An Act To Prohibit Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations for 5 Years To  
Allow for Safety Testing and Investigations into Reproductive Harm”**

**January 11, 2022**

Good afternoon, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Hilary Schneider and I am the Regional Government Relations Director for the Northeast for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). In this role, I serve as the lead Government Relations Director for Maine. 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.

On behalf of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on LD 867 – a piece of legislation that could place the health of cancer patients at greater risk. This bill prohibits mandatory COVID-19 vaccination requirements for 5 years from the date of a vaccine's first emergency use authorization by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration.

ACS CAN represents millions of patients and cancer survivors and their families nationwide, including the more than 10,000 Mainers<sup>i</sup> who will be diagnosed with cancer this year. Many cancer patients and their families have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has placed cancer patients at substantial risk for severe illness. Cancer treatments – from chemotherapy to immunotherapy to bone marrow transplants – often weaken a patient’s immune system, making cancer patients especially vulnerable to communicable illnesses like COVID-19. A survey of cancer patients and survivors at the end of last summer found that two-thirds of patients, and many caregivers, were worried about protecting their health from COVID-19.<sup>ii</sup> Those worries, combined with disruptions in health care services, have led many cancer patients to delay or forego treatment.<sup>iii</sup>

Fortunately, the availability of a COVID-19 vaccine will mean many cancer patients can be protected from the virus and resume their normal treatments safely. But we don’t yet know how effective vaccines may be in people being treated for cancer. It is possible that cancer



patients – or others with weakened immune systems – may not be fully protected even if they are vaccinated. A recent study from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society found that one in four blood cancer patients fail to produce detectable antibodies after COVID-19 vaccination.<sup>iv</sup> This makes it even more critical that as many healthy people as possible are fully vaccinated in order to protect those who are unable to be vaccinated or for whom the vaccine may be less effective.

The health and safety of people with cancer as well as our staff is our top priority. In order to protect our constituents who are at high risk for the most serious outcomes from COVID-19, the American Cancer Society and ACS CAN are requiring vaccines for all staff, as well as volunteers who interact with cancer patients in our Road to Recovery patient transportation program. The American Cancer Society and ACS CAN also support mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for all health care workers. Prohibitions from vaccine requirements, like those in LD 867, would undermine our ability to protect our constituents who are already facing a life-threatening illness.

The provisions in LD 867 would slow, perhaps even prevent, the protection of cancer patients, even where it is needed most – in health care settings. We urge this committee to reject this legislation. For these reasons, we ask you to vote “ought not to pass” on LD 867. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this testimony.

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<sup>i</sup> American Cancer Society, “Cancer Facts & Figures, 2021.” Atlanta: American Cancer Society, 2021.

<sup>ii</sup> American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, 2021. *Survivor Views: Understanding Access to Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic: September 2020 Survey Findings Summary*, [https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/Survivor%20Views%20COVID%20Access%20Polling%20Memo%202020.10.08\\_Final.pdf](https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/Survivor%20Views%20COVID%20Access%20Polling%20Memo%202020.10.08_Final.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, 2021. *Survivor Views: Pandemic-Related Challenges Persist for Cancer Patients and Survivors*, <https://www.fightcancer.org/policy-resources/survivor-views-pandemic-related-challenges-persist-cancer-patients-and-survivors>.

<sup>iv</sup> Greenberger, L.M., Saltzman, L.A., Senefeld, J.W., Johnson, P.W., DeGennaro, L.J., Nichols, G.L., Antibody response to SARS-CoV-2 vaccines in patients with hematologic malignancies, *Cancer Cell* (2021), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ccell.2021.07.012>.

