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Kissell's Lymphedema Bill Gains Support from Komen for the Cure, Living Beyond Breast Cancer, Breast Cancer Network of Strength, Colon Cancer Alliance & LIVESTRONG

The Lymphedema Diagnosis and Treatment Cost Saving Act of 2010, legislation introduced by Congressman Larry Kissell to improve treatment coverage for lymphedema sufferers, continues to garner support from national cancer organizations. H.R. 4662 requires Medicare to offer fair treatment coverage for Americans suffering from primary and secondary lymphedema.

Lymphedema, also known as lymphatic obstruction, is a condition of localized fluid retention and tissue swelling caused by a compromised lymphatic system. Many cancer patients suffer from this condition. “This is a terrible condition that affects thousands of Americans every day, and yet, many cannot get the treatment they need to improve their quality of life,” Kissell said. “After meeting many folks suffering from lymphedema, I believe this legislation will help dramatically improve their lives. I am grateful so many organizations dedicated to help those who fight cancer support the Lymphedema Diagnosis and Treatment Cost Saving Act.”

The Susan G. Komen for the Cure Advocacy Alliance, Living Beyond Breast Cancer and the Breast Cancer Network of Strength signed a joint letter of support – thanking Congressman Kissell on behalf of breast cancer survivors for introducing the Lymphedema Diagnosis and Treatment Cost Saving Act of 2010.

In a joint letter to Congressman Kissell, Jennifer Luray, President, Komen Advocacy Alliance; Jean Sachs, CEO Living Beyond Breast Cancer; and Kay Wissman, Director of Government Relations for Breast Cancer Network of Strength, stated, "As you know, breast cancer survivors can develop lymphedema as a result of surgery or radiation to the lymph nodes in the armpit. Any woman who has breast cancer surgery and lymph nodes removed is at risk for developing lymphedema, and she remains at risk for the rest of her life. Fortunately, most breast cancer survivors do not get lymphedema. However, the women who do may face considerable pain, reduced movement, serious infections, emotional distress and reduced quality of life.”

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The Colon Cancer Alliance has also lent its support to the legislation. "Many cancer survivors suffer from lymphedema following primary treatment. It is vitally important that Medicare cover lymphedema treatment and treatment materials, including compression bandages and garments required for everyday care," said Andrew Speigel, CEO of the Colon Cancer Alliance. "The Colon Cancer Alliance is proud to join forces with other cancer organizations in support of the Lymphedema Diagnosis and Treatment Cost Saving Act of 2010, HR 4662."

Earlier this year, LIVESTRONG, the foundation started by seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, announced its endorsement. More than 39 organizations have lent their endorsement to H.R. 4662 including National Lymphedema Network, Lymphedema Awareness Foundation, Carolinas Rehabilitation and NC Comprehensive Cancer Program.

Kissell introduced the legislation after meeting Charlotte constituent Heather Ferguson. Ferguson's young son, Dylan, suffers from primary lymphedema. After fighting with her insurance company to get coverage for Dylan's compression bandage treatments, she took her fight statewide. Ferguson worked with North Carolina Representative Tricia Cotham to get legislation through the North Carolina General Assembly before meeting with Congressman Kissell to ask him to take the fight to Congress.

The treatment for lymphedema is known as complex decongestive therapy. This treatment is used worldwide, is not experimental, and has been used for decades with proven success. Not all components of the treatment fall under the categories for which Medicare typically provides coverage. With treatment, patients can live long, healthy and virtually normal lives. However, without treatment, the disease can progressively worsen, causing severe disfigurement, disability, pain and in some cases, death. H.R. 4662 currently has 39 bipartisan cosponsors.