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April 10, 2019

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
2367 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
– and –
The Honorable Buddy Carter
2432 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
– and –
The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
1111 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515
– and –
The Honorable Mike Kelly
1707 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Lymphedema Treatment Act (HR1948/S518)

Dear Representatives Schakowsky, Carter, Blumenauer, and Kelly,

I am writing on behalf of the Cancer Legal Resource Center to offer our organization's formal endorsement of the Lymphedema Treatment Act (HR1948/S518). This bill would expand the definition of Durable Medical Equipment under Medicare Part B to include lymphedema garments and bandages, thus allowing lymphedema patients to get the medical treatment they need.

Disability Rights Legal Center (DRLC) was founded in 1975 and is the nation's oldest cross-disability civil rights organization. We advocate for the rights of people with disabilities in order to eliminate discrimination and other legal barriers that keep people with disabilities in poverty. Our mission is to champion the rights of people with disabilities through education, advocacy, and litigation. The Cancer Legal Resource Center (CLRC), a program of the DRLC, supports this bill. The CLRC specifically provides legal assistance to cancer patients and caregivers, and recognizes that these individuals face many unique challenges. Every year CLRC's dedicated attorneys, staff members, and volunteers help thousands of patients and their families confront these challenges by providing individualized information about federal and state laws as well as locally available resources in a wide range of areas, including health insurance appeals, government benefits, disability benefits, financial assistance, advance planning options, and many others through our toll-free national telephone assistance line.



DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCACY CENTER

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Many of our callers both nationally and locally in California have concerns about lymphedema and insurance coverage. Lymphedema is a chronic, progressive, and incurable condition that affects cancer patients when surgery, removal of lymph nodes to determine whether cancer has spread, radiation, or scar tissue build-up following radiation or surgery causes damage to the lymphatic system. Lymphedema often occurs in breast cancer patients, and may also affect individuals with uterine, prostate, vulvar, ovarian, head and neck cancers, lymphoma, or melanoma.

Untreated lymphedema results in the swelling of an arm, leg, or other body part because lymph fluid cannot drain properly. This swelling causes pain, difficulty engaging in the activities of daily life (including work), repeat hospitalizations, and can even cause total disability. While there is no cure, lymphedema can be treated and managed effectively.

Compression garments and bandages form an integral component of a successful lymphedema treatment regimen and are particularly important for the daily self-care necessary to control swelling and prevent development, or worsening, of associated health problems. Patients with lymphedema require the constant use of compression garments and/or bandages throughout the remainder of their lives.

Currently, Medicare does not cover compression garments or bandages. Medicare *does* cover costly visits to the hospital for systemic infections and other complications due to lymphedema that has not been properly controlled. The cost of compression garments and bandages to control lymphedema is far less than the cost of repeat hospitalizations for untreated lymphedema that has progressed. Expanding the definition of Durable Medical Equipment under Medicare Part B to include lymphedema garments and bandages would help alleviate, not add to, the Medicare budget and eliminate unnecessary pain and suffering for millions of Medicare beneficiaries.

This important legislation would ensure that lymphedema patients who rely on Medicare can get the help they need to manage their conditions, alleviate pain, and continue as contributing members of society. The CLRC strongly supports the Lymphedema Treatment Act.

Sincerely,



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CC: Heather Ferguson, Executive Director, Lymphedema Advocacy Group