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LUNG CANCER ALLIANCE HAILS CONNECTICUT LEADERSHIP ON LUNG CANCER ISSUES

New Legislation Seeks to Establish Early Detection Program for Those at Risk for the Disease

Washington, DC [February 6, 2007] – Lung Cancer Alliance (LCA), the only national organization solely dedicated to support and advocacy for people with lung cancer and those at risk for the disease, praised legislation introduced in late January in the Connecticut General Assembly that would establish a state-funded pilot CT (Computed Tomography) scanning program to catch lung cancer at the earliest and most treatable stage.

Laurie Fenton Ambrose, president of LCA, called the bill “groundbreaking.”

“If this bill is enacted, Connecticut will become a national leader in aggressively addressing lung cancer, the number one cancer killer,” she said.

Ambrose highly commended Senator Mary Ann Handley (D – 4th District) for her leadership on lung cancer issues and for crafting the proposal introduced yesterday as a bill sponsored by the Public Health Committee, now S.B. 1033.

Said Senator Handley, co-chair of the Public Health Committee and Chief Deputy Majority Whip Leader, “My bill would provide coverage for early lung cancer screening for ‘at risk’ patients whether they have symptoms or not, because when patients become symptomatic, the lung cancer is almost always too far along to treat effectively.”

“The dual purpose of my bill is to detect lung cancer earlier so it doesn’t necessarily have to be fatal,” Senator Handley explained, “and to make sure these screening procedures are available to as many Connecticut families as possible.”

The bill would give grants and other incentives to state hospitals to encourage a CT scanning protocol for people at risk for lung cancer, provided that at least 25 percent of those scanned are minorities and at least 50 percent are low income.

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NO MORE EXCUSES. NO MORE LUNG CANCER.

“Lung cancer will kill more than 1,800 people in Connecticut this year, making it the number one cancer killer in the state,” said Judith Levi, head of the Connecticut chapter of LCA and a Glastonbury resident. “We are losing more people in Connecticut each year to lung cancer than breast, prostate and colon cancers combined.”

Thanks to aggressive screening programs, 88.5 percent of the people diagnosed with breast cancer will live at least five years. Ninety-nine percent of prostate cancer patients and 65 percent of colon cancer patients will also survive five years after diagnosis.

“Only 15 percent of lung cancer patients will live five years,” Levi continues. “This is because there are usually no symptoms until the disease has already advanced to such a late stage that most patients die within months of diagnosis. The only way to change this is through early detection and CT scanning,” she said.

CT scans ordered by doctors as a diagnostic tool are covered by insurance and Medicare, but scans of people with no symptoms generally are not. Meanwhile the retail cost of a CT scan has fallen below \$200.

“As the long-standing chair of the Human Services Committee, Senator Handley has led efforts to bring affordable health care to all Connecticut families,” concluded Ambrose. “With this bill, she is taking the lead on lung cancer as well. We hope the rest of the country will follow Connecticut’s lead.”

The Lung Cancer Alliance (www.LungCancerAlliance.org) is the only national non-profit organization solely dedicated to patient support and advocacy for people living with, or at risk for, lung cancer. As the number one cancer killer, lung cancer will kill more than 160,000 Americans this year alone, causing more deaths than breast, prostate, colon, liver, kidney cancers and melanoma combined.

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