



2020 BILL AIMS TO LOWER COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING AGE TO 45 TO SLOW THE RISE OF LATE STAGE DISEASE AMONG YOUNG COLORADANS

DENVER, COLORADO, January 16, 2020 – This session, Colorado lawmakers will have the opportunity to stem the alarming rise of colorectal cancer among younger age groups by lowering the screening age and ensuring coverage of preventive care for Coloradans.

Colorectal cancer is now the fastest growing diagnosed cancer among young women in Colorado and the single biggest cancer killer of men under 50 nationally. The disease is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in Colorado for men and women combined, with an estimated 1940 new diagnoses - and 660 deaths - last year alone. Nationally, deaths from colorectal cancer among people younger than 55 have increased 2% per year between 2007 and 2016.

Currently, Colorado law provides for preventive colorectal cancer screenings from age 50 for those at average risk. This legislation would ensure that average-risk Coloradans would be eligible for colorectal cancer screening from the age of 45, in line with latest guidelines of the American Cancer Society (ACS), a move which ACS believes may cut 45-49 year old CRC deaths in half, without adding new screening costs into the system.

Half of all colorectal cancer diagnoses in Colorado are late stage meaning the disease is far more difficult and expensive to treat. Late stage diagnoses among 45-49 year-olds, who have no access to preventive screening, is 65%. Stage IV colorectal cancer has a 10% five-year survival rate and healthcare costs are approximately five times more than early stage treatment, which has a 90% survival rate. Typical late stage treatment costs are \$618k per patient vs \$132k for early stage. (Source: AM J Manag Care 2015 21(7): E430-438).

House Bill 20-1103 'Concerning Colorectal Cancer Screening Coverage' was introduced by Speaker Pro Tempore, Janet Buckner, (D-HD40), Representative Kevin Larson (R-HD22) and Representative Perry Will (R-HD57). Senators Rhonda Fields (D-SD29) and Kevin Priola (R-SD25) are supporting the bill.

Unveiling the new bill, Representative Buckner said: "Colorectal cancer is highly preventable and treatable when caught early but diagnoses among young people are often discovered at late stage when treatment is far less effective and more costly. Increasing access to screening for Coloradans aged 45-49 will save lives and reduce late stage healthcare costs and I am pleased to sponsor this critical cancer initiative."

Colorado colorectal cancer survivor Scott Wilson, who was diagnosed with stage IV colorectal cancer aged 48, added: "As a survivor of young onset Stage IV colorectal cancer, I know effective screening at 45 would have had a real impact on my life, in all likelihood preventing a late stage diagnosis and the high associated costs - physical, mental and financial."

The bill also seeks to eliminate out-of-pocket costs for patients undergoing preventive colonoscopies following an abnormal non-invasive screening test, such as FIT (fecal immunochemical test). FIT detects hidden blood in the stool - which can be an early sign of cancer - but a follow-up colonoscopy is necessary to remove any pre-cancerous polyps and prevent cancer from developing.

“House Bill 20-1103 is a simple and straightforward update to the existing law requiring insurance coverage for colorectal cancer screening in accordance with recent changes to clinical guidelines based on new evidence,” said ACS CAN Government Relations Director R.J. Ours. “By updating the law, we can save more lives by finding colorectal cancer early, when treatment is more likely to be successful and by detecting and removing polyps, which contributes to the prevention of colorectal cancer.”

Dr. Debra S. Dyer, chair of the Colorado Cancer Coalition, concluded: “The chances of a 45 year-old today being diagnosed with colorectal cancer are the same as they were for a 50 year-old in the early 90s. We urge lawmakers to support preventive screening legislation which will have a significant impact on our mission to reduce the burden of cancer in Colorado.”

The bill now heads to the House Health and Insurance Committee for action.

The Colorectal Cancer Screening Bill is supported by the Colorado Cancer Coalition (www.coloradocancercoalition.org), The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (www.fightcancer.org/Colorado) and Fight CRC (www.fightcolorectalcancer.org)

Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, the Colorado Cancer Coalition aims to improve the lives of all Coloradans touched by cancer.

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