



January 4, 2022

President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Congressional Leadership:

Congress passed the National Cancer Act 50 years ago last month, marking the start of America's War on Cancer. Decades of research and innovation have contributed to our fight against the disease, but we continue to lose more than 600,000 Americans annually.<sup>i</sup> At this rate, we lose more Americans to cancer every three years than to all of our nation's armed conflicts combined.<sup>ii</sup> So while we have made progress, our work is far from done. We have a unique and urgent opportunity to align policy with scientific advancement and make a transformational impact on cancer care in the years to come, beginning with Medicare coverage of multi-cancer early detection tests.

Congress and the Administration face enormous challenges as our nation continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic while also battling cancer and other dreaded diseases. Due to the steep drop in cancer screenings caused by COVID-19, we are bracing for a surge in late-stage diagnoses. As Congress considers significant legislative packages – and focuses on how to ensure we are never so vulnerable again – it is our hope that you seize the opportunity to change the trajectory of how we fight cancer and pass the bipartisan Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act (S.1873/H.R.1946).

New blood-based screening technologies, called multi-cancer early detection tests, hold tremendous promise. These new tests have shown the ability to detect more than 50 different types of cancers before they spread using a simple blood draw.<sup>iii</sup> Leveraging the progress of the last half century of the War on Cancer and the learnings of the Human Genome Project, these new tools could dramatically increase early-stage diagnosis and enable earlier treatment for a wider range of cancers. New research by FasterCures also finds that these early detection technologies would stimulate cancer research and the development of new treatment options for early-stage patients.<sup>iv</sup>

Early detection and diagnosis save lives, lower treatment costs, and improve quality of life, but today Medicare coverage is limited to screenings for just five out of the hundreds of cancers. In fact, over

70 percent of cancer deaths are caused by cancers without early screening options.<sup>v</sup> Multi-cancer early detection tests will improve that terrible statistic, and the Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act would create a pathway to allow patients and providers to access these vital tests once they are approved by the FDA and shown to have clinical benefit.

Importantly, passage of this legislation will advance cancer equity by addressing the significant disparities that exist in late-stage diagnosis which contribute to worse outcomes for people of color.<sup>vi</sup>

Medicare patients are among those at the highest risk for cancer, and Medicare pays for over 30% of the nearly 300 billion spent annually on cancer care.<sup>vii</sup> While adults over 65 stand to benefit the most from these tests, they face unreasonable delays in access absent Congressional action.

This is our opportunity to define the next era of the War on Cancer, to inject hope into the battle being fought by millions of Americans every day, and to help usher in a new way of detecting and treating cancer. We urge Congress to pass and the President to sign the bipartisan Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act (H.R. 1946 / S. 1873) now.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
Association of Community Cancer Centers  
Cancer Support Community  
National Minority Quality Forum  
Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance  
Prevent Cancer Foundation

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<sup>i</sup> *Cancer Facts & Figures 2020*. (n.d.). Retrieved from American Cancer Society: <https://www.cancer.org/research/cancer-facts-statistics/all-cancer-facts-figures/cancer-facts-figures-2020.html>

<sup>ii</sup> *America's Wars*. (2021). Retrieved from Department of Veterans Affairs: [https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs\\_americas\\_wars.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> M.C. Liu, G. O. (2020). Sensitive and specific multi-cancer detection and localization using methylation signatures in cell-free DNA. *Annals of Oncology*, 745-759. [https://www.annalsofoncology.org/article/S0923-7534\(20\)36058-0/fulltext](https://www.annalsofoncology.org/article/S0923-7534(20)36058-0/fulltext)

<sup>iv</sup> Hadly Clark, S. H. (2021). *The Promise of Multi-Cancer Early Detection Technologies in Encouraging Research and Development*. Milken Institute: FasterCures. <https://milkeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/The%20Promise%20of%20Multi-Cancer%20Early%20Detection%20Technologies.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Ezell, S. (2021). *Seizing the Transformative Opportunity of Multi-cancer Early Detection*. Information Technology & Innovation Foundation. <https://itif.org/sites/default/files/2021-multi-cancer-detection.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> (2021). *Late Stage Diagnosis of Unscreened Cancer: A Health Disparity*. National Minority Quality Forum.

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vii (2020). *The Costs of Cancer*. American Cancer Society.

<https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/National%20Documents/Costs-of-Cancer-2020-10222020.pdf>