

October 12, 2011

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The Honorable Pat Toomey
502 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3802

Dear Senator Toomey,

The Pennsylvania Society of Oncology and Hematology congratulates you on your appointment to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. The committee faces an enormous challenge as well as an extraordinary opportunity to help our nation at a critical time in our history. You are to be applauded for your willingness to participate.

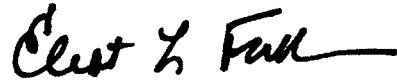
The Pennsylvania Society of Oncology and Hematology (PSOH) is a state affiliate of the American Society of Clinical Oncology. Our society represents over three hundred physicians, nurses and health professionals dedicated to the treatment of patients with cancer and blood disorders. We are frequently called on to comment on state and national policy.

Future budget cuts will cut a broad swath through the fabric of our country. We are all well aware of the exponential increase of health care costs and the ultimate decrease of these costs will undoubtedly account for a significant share of the deficit reduction. New treatments for cancer patients carry a very high price tag. Nevertheless, many of these agents have revolutionized cancer care, improving survival and giving our patients new hope. In the past few years, decreases in reimbursement for these expensive agents coupled with delays by insurance companies paying oncologists has caused many physicians to close their practices, resulting in limited access to quality cancer care. Close scrutiny of the cost of these drugs, assigned by the pharmaceutical industry, is a potential vehicle for cutting the cost of oncology care. It is interesting to note that many of these drugs cost significantly less in Europe than in the United States.

Additionally, there are many outmoded and wasteful practices in medicine that demand the attention and action of the Joint Committee. We hope that you will acknowledge the recent accomplishments in oncology therapy while creating a rational system that stewards our resources more effectively. The Board of Directors of PSOH requests that access to quality cancer care remains intact and that we can continue to provide the care that our patients desperately need. We hope and trust that this is taken into consideration as budget decisions are made.

Congratulations again on your appointment to this critical committee. PSOH, as the representative of cancer care professionals in the Commonwealth stands ready to help in any way. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eliot L. Friedman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Eliot L. Friedman, MD
President, Pennsylvania Society of Oncology and Hematology