



May 4, 2010

Senator Clementa Pinckney
512 Gressette Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Senator Pinckney:

Tobacco use prevention remains a priority advocacy issue for the American Cancer Society at the federal, state and local levels. Smoking is linked to at least 15 different cancers and accounts for 30% of all cancer deaths. Smoking is responsible for almost 9 out of 10 lung cancer deaths. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in both men and women, and is one of the hardest cancers to treat. The American Cancer Society supports S. 1378, which requires certain health insurers to cover tobacco use cessation programs and asks South Carolina's private health insurers to play an important role in helping people quit smoking.

Forty percent of smokers make a quit attempt each year. Most will not use an evidence-based cessation treatment program while trying to quit. Three to five percent of smokers will actually stop smoking. Providing tobacco users with access to both medication and cessation counseling increases quit rates by 40%. Including cessation treatments as a covered health benefit increases quit rates by 30%. Cessation services should include all evidenced-based medications and counseling treatments to improve quit rates and save lives.

The sooner smokers quit, the more they can reduce their chances of getting cancer and other diseases. Within minutes of smoking the last cigarette, the body begins to restore itself. The risk of lung cancer is less in people who quit smoking than in people who keep smoking the same number of cigarettes every day. The risk decreases as the number of years since quitting increases. People who quit smoking before age 50 have one-half the risk of dying in the next 15 years compared with people who keep smoking.

American Cancer Society supports S. 1378 because cessation treatments are a proven prevention tool that will reduce disease and save health care costs.

Sincerely,

Nancy Cheney,
Government Relations Director

cc: Members of the Committee

American Cancer Society South Atlantic Division, Inc.
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