

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network: Wisconsin falling short on policies to improve cancer patients' quality of life

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MADISON, Wis. – Aug. 9, 2018 – Wisconsin falls short when it comes to implementing policies and passing legislation to improve cancer patients' quality of life, according to the latest edition of "How Do You Measure Up?: A Progress Report on State Legislative Activity to Reduce Cancer Incidence and Mortality." The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network released the report today.

"How Do You Measure Up?" rates states in nine specific areas of public policy that can help fight cancer, including funding for cancer screening programs, tobacco control policies, increased access to care through Medicaid and restricting indoor tanning devices for minors. The report also looks at whether a state provides a balanced approach to pain medication and if it has passed policies proven to increase patient quality of life.

"This report confirms that we must do more to reduce suffering and death from cancer," said Sara Sahli, Wisconsin government relations director for ACS CAN. "In 2018 alone, more than 33,000 Wisconsinites will be diagnosed with cancer. We owe

it to them to ensure their quality of life throughout their diagnosis, treatment and survivorship.”

ACS CAN supports the expansion of palliative care services to improve the treatment of cancer patients. This specialized medical care offers a coordinated, team-based approach among medical professionals to help meet a patient’s needs and symptoms during and after treatment. Palliative care is essential to achieving the goal of comprehensive, cost-effective care that improves patient satisfaction and health outcomes.

Wisconsin lawmakers could improve access to palliative care by establishing an advisory council of state experts to build out a more robust program. The goals of the council would be to make information more available, increase education opportunities for medical professionals and encourage routine screening of patients for potential palliative care needs.

“When palliative care is used to address the side effects of a serious illness like cancer, patients are more satisfied and overall patient care costs go down,” Sahli said. “Twenty-three states have already recognized the value of this type of care and have established advisory councils to determine the best ways to reach their communities. We made great progress on this issue last session but never got it across the finish line. We will be making this a top priority when the 2019 session begins.”