

# **U.S. Sens. Baldwin and Capito: Champion bipartisan reform to improve palliative and hospice care**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) reintroduced the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA), a bipartisan reform to grow, improve and sustain the palliative care and hospice workforce to keep pace with patient need and to help improve the well-being of Americans with life-threatening illnesses and their families.

“I was raised by my maternal grandparents and later served as my grandmother’s primary caregiver as she grew older, so this issue is personal to me, and I want to make a difference for families experiencing serious health concerns,” said Senator Baldwin. “I’m proud to work across party lines and reintroduce the bipartisan Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act with my colleague Senator Capito. We must do more to grow our health care workforce to safeguard and improve the quality of care for the growing number of patients with serious or life-threatening illnesses.”

“Having served as a caregiver for my parents living with Alzheimer’s disease, I understand how important palliative and hospice care is and appreciate how much support and comfort it provides to patients and their families,” Senator Capito said. “In order to preserve access to this care, we have to strengthen training and education options for individuals working in these fields, and that’s what this bill

would do. I am proud to join my colleague Senator Baldwin in reintroducing this legislation that will help so many facing serious illnesses.”

The Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act would strengthen training for new and existing physicians, those who teach palliative care, and other providers who are part of the palliative care team to give patients and their families a voice in their care and treatment goals. It also boosts palliative care research and provides academic and career awards to incentivize the practice and study of palliative and hospice care.

Organizations and advocates from Wisconsin and across the country have expressed support for the bipartisan legislation including Alzheimer’s & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin, American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM), Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Alzheimer’s Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin, Catholic Health Association, National Association for Home Care & Hospice, National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and National Brain Tumor Society. The legislation is also cosponsored by Senators Angus King (I-ME), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and John Hoeven (R-ND).

“Palliative and hospice care provide comfort and relief to people with life-limiting or life-threatening illnesses; these supportive services, however, are not widely available,” said Robert Kellerman, Chair of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network. “We strongly support the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA), which will help grow and improve the palliative and hospice care workforce, and promote efforts to inform patients, families and providers about the benefits of this essential end-of-life care and the resources and materials available to support them.”

“At a time when more and more health professionals are recognizing the benefits of offering palliative care services, we applaud Senators Baldwin and Capito for the bipartisan introduction of PCHETA in the Senate. Evidence-based research shows that patients who receive access to palliative care services from the point of diagnosis and throughout their care have better quality of life. Passage of PCHETA would lead to better health outcomes for patients with serious illnesses like cancer. The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network joins with other advocates from the patient advocacy community in calling for the timely consideration and passage of PCHETA in both chambers of Congress,” said Lisa A. Lacasse, President

of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

“We again are very pleased with the reintroduction of the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act. This legislation is very important to help improve the care of our vulnerable, ill patients. As palliative care and hospice clinicians, and especially as a statewide palliative network, we continue to be quite proud of this bill and the enormous potential benefits for our patient’s, their families and our medical colleagues. We hope to see continued movement on this most important issue,” said Dr. Tim Jessick, Chair, Co-Founder Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin.

“We commend Senators Baldwin and Capito for their leadership in expanding opportunities for interdisciplinary education and training in palliative care,” said Joanne Wolfe, MD MPH FAAHPM, President of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM). “PCHETA will lead to great improvements in quality of care and quality of life for the growing and diverse population of patients with serious illness or multiple chronic conditions, as well as their families and caregivers.”

“Bipartisan legislation like the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act are critical in the fight against Alzheimer’s, which 1 in 3 seniors currently die with,” said Robert Egge, Alzheimer’s Association Chief Public Policy officer and Alzheimer’s Impact Movement Executive Director. “The Alzheimer’s Association and the Alzheimer’s Impact Movement are grateful for champion lawmakers like Senator Baldwin, who work vigorously to push for improved quality of care and enhanced quality of life for individuals living with Alzheimer’s and other dementias, and their caregivers.”

“Brain tumors — whether malignant or benign — in addition to being life-threatening, often trigger symptoms and other issues similar to that of neurological disorders, which can be debilitating,” said David Arons, Chief Executive Officer, National Brain Tumor Society. “Patients often have to endure seizures, headaches, memory loss and trouble with concentration, aphasia and speech difficulty, weakness in motor control and function, issues with balance and coordination, and cognitive decline. Many will lose the ability to work and even the ability to drive. It’s a disease that can take away one’s independence and sense of self. Our hope is that, if passed, this bill will lead to an improvement in the quality of palliative care and access to it thanks to an improved workforce capable of helping brain tumor patients.”

“Palliative care provides the supports and comfort that allow individuals to participate as fully as possible in their lives. Fulfilling our Nation’s need for palliative care-trained clinical staff is a widely-recognized imperative in our health care system, and is essential to meeting the care needs of a wide array of patients – including those with multiple chronic conditions, patients with advanced illness, and those who are terminally ill. The National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC) applauds Senators Baldwin, Capito and others for their continuing efforts to address this need through their reintroduction of the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA),” said Bill Dombi, NAHC President.

Palliative care and hospice care focus on relieving and preventing patients’ suffering and improving their quality of life. This interprofessional team-based approach focuses on the patients’ needs, explains treatment options and gives patients and their families a voice in realizing their treatment goals. Palliative care has been embraced in both Wisconsin and West Virginia as a critical component of high quality health care.

Over the last ten years, the number of hospital-based palliative care programs has quickly increased, but the number of providers available to fulfill the needs of these patients has not kept pace. Furthermore, many patients and care providers are not aware of the benefits and options for palliative and hospice care. To address this issue, the PCHETA will support the following:

- **Workforce Development:** Establishes fellowship programs within new Palliative Care and Hospice Education Centers to provide short-term intensive courses focused on palliative care. By supporting an interprofessional, team-based approach to palliative care, the fellowships will provide supplemental training for faculty members in medical schools and other health professions schools, including pharmacy, nursing, social work, chaplaincy and other allied health disciplines in an accredited health professions school or program. Providers who do not have formal training in palliative care will be able to upgrade their knowledge and skills for the care of individuals with serious or life-threatening illness as well as enhance their interdisciplinary teaching skills.
- **Palliative Care and Hospice Education Centers:** Establishes Palliative Care and Hospice Education Centers to improve the interprofessional team-based training of health professionals in palliative care; develop and disseminate curricula relating to palliative care; support the training and retraining of faculty; support continuing education; provide students with clinical training in appropriate sites of care; and

provide traineeships for advanced practice nurses.

- **Physician Training:** Establishes grants or contracts to schools of medicine, teaching hospitals and graduate medical education programs to train physicians who plan to teach palliative medicine. Programs will be required to develop specific performance-based measures to evaluate the competency of trainees.
- **Nurse Training:** Creates incentives for hospice and palliative nursing, in education, practice and quality grants, workforce development, and nurse retention projects.
- **Enhanced Research:** Directs the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to use existing authorities and funds to expand palliative care research to advance clinical practice and improve care delivery for patients with serious or life-threatening illness.
- **Palliative Care Education and Awareness:** Supports the promotion of information, resources and materials about the benefits of palliative care services to patients, families and health professionals. The bill also requires that any information disseminated be posted on Federal agency websites and informed by professional and patient stakeholders.
- **Academic Career Awards:** Establishes a program to promote the career development of physicians who are board certified or board eligible in hospice and palliative medicine and have a junior, non-tenured faculty appointment at an accredited school of medicine.
- **Career Incentive Awards:** Provides grants or contracts for eligible health professionals, such as advanced practice nurses, social workers, physician assistants, pharmacists, or students of psychology, who agree to teach or practice in the field of palliative care for at least 5 years.