



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HEMATOLOGY

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Dear New Members of the 116th Congress,

On behalf of the American Society of Hematology (ASH), I am writing to welcome you to Washington as a member of the 116th Congress. ASH looks forward to working with you and your staff to help advance the Society's mission to further the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of blood diseases and disorders.

Hematologists focus both on researching diseases and treating patients with malignant hematologic disorders such as leukemia, lymphoma, and multiple myeloma, as well as non-malignant conditions such as sickle cell disease, thalassemia, bone marrow failure, venous thromboembolism, and hemophilia. In addition, hematologists were pioneers in demonstrating the potential of treating various hematologic diseases through the transplantation of bone marrow stem cells, and we continue to be innovators in the fields of stem cell biology, regenerative medicine, transfusion medicine, precision medicine, and gene therapy.

ASH is the leader in representing the interests of scientists and clinicians working in the field of hematology on Capitol Hill and within federal agencies. The Society is pleased to be able to serve as a resource on hematologic issues and we look forward to working with you to advance the Society's priorities, which are outlined below.

- *Medical Research and Public Health Funding* – ASH continues to advocate for federal support of biomedical research and public health funding, including funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the CDC. Much of the research that has produced cures and treatments for hematologic diseases has been funded by the NIH and sustained and predictable funding for NIH is necessary for important research into new cures and treatments to continue. Meanwhile, CDC's programs are crucial to ensuring a strong public health infrastructure, protecting Americans from public health threats and emergencies, reducing health care costs and improving overall health.
- *Physician Reimbursement* – ASH regularly comments on numerous proposed rules and regulations issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that impact physician reimbursement and patient access to care, including the Physician Fee Schedule, Hospital Inpatient Prospective Payment System, and Inpatient Prospective Payment System.
- *Sickle Cell Disease Treatment and Research* – During the 115th Congress, ASH worked to pass the Sickle Cell Disease and Other Heritable Blood Disorders Research, Surveillance, Prevention, and Treatment Act, which was signed into law on December 18, 2018. A key provision of this legislation authorizes the federal government to award data collection grants to states, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations with the goal of better understanding the prevalence and distribution of heritable blood disorders, including SCD, and the associated health outcomes and complications of these disorders. Funding provided through (*cont'd*)

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the annual appropriations process will be essential to ensuring the ability of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other government agencies to issue these grants.

- *Patient Access to Care* – High drug prices are a major issue facing patients with hematologic conditions and ASH continues to advocate for ways to ensure access to safe and effective hematologic drugs. Over the past several years, ASH has advocated for legislation to ensure that cancer patients have equality of access (and equality of insurance coverage) to all approved anticancer regimens including, but not limited to oral and intravenous drugs. ASH has also advocated for legislation that would significantly limit how much consumers pay for specialty prescription drugs (including biologics and other drugs for diseases and conditions such as cancer and anemia) by requiring a fixed co-pay (instead of coinsurance) for drugs covered under an insurance plan's prescription drug benefit.

Finally, please do not hesitate to contact the ASH staff members noted below if you have any questions or need additional information concerning any of these issues or any other issue related to health care Congress may consider.

- Suzanne Leous, MPA, Chief Policy Officer (sleous@hematology.org) – inquiries about the Society's overall policy agenda.
- Tracy Roades, Senior Manager, Legislative Advocacy (troades@hematology.org) – pending legislation or general inquiries about the Society's legislative priorities.
- Stephanie Kaplan, Senior Manager, Government Relations & Public Health (skaplan@hematology.org) – information about the Society's sickle cell disease initiative and other public health issues.
- Leslie Brady, MPH, Policy & Practice Manager (lbrady@hematology.org) – information about the Society's activities impacting physician reimbursement and patient access to care.
- Foster Curry, Government Relations Coordinator (fcurry@hematology.org) – information about scheduling meetings with ASH staff or ASH members who are constituents.
- Katherine Stark, Policy & Practice Coordinator (kstark@hematology.org) – information about the ASH/AAAS Congressional Fellowship Program.

The Society looks forward to working together and being a resource for you and your staff to make informed decisions regarding legislation that will impact the health of all Americans.

Sincerely,



Roy Silverstein, MD
President