

DRAFT OP-ED – Alliance for Childhood Cancer

Surviving and Thriving Beyond Childhood Cancer

They are the words every parent dreads hearing: Your child has cancer. While treatments and outcomes for children with cancer have improved vastly over the years, all parents who have a child with cancer want their daughter or son to get the best care possible to beat their disease, and to ensure their long-term health.

The number of childhood cancer survivors has grown exponentially over the past 4 decades. In 1960, only four percent of children with cancer survived more than five years, but now, nearly 75 percent of the more than 12,000 children who are diagnosed with cancer have a five-year survival rate. Currently, one in 900 children in the United States is a cancer survivor, and by 2010 that number will grow to one in 250.

This increase in survival has been a blessing for children with cancer and their families, who no longer have to fear that cancer is an automatic death sentence. But with these high survival rates come a host of long-term side effects that could have an impact on these survivors way beyond childhood.

Approximately two-thirds of childhood cancer survivors will have at least one life-altering effect from their treatment, and one-fourth will experience serious or life-threatening effects. These include neurological or cognitive effects, such as learning disabilities, cardiac or pulmonary problems, a compromised immune system, and increased risk for other cancers.

[Insert information about particular effects on Organization's constituents. Include anecdotal information if possible about a childhood cancer patient that you know who has had late effects from cancer treatment].

A series of reports by the Institute of Medicine, including "Childhood Cancer Survivorship: Improving Care and Quality of Life," outline recommendations to address the needs of childhood cancer survivors, which include expanding research to improve the lives of childhood cancer survivors, developing and disseminating long-term follow-up guidelines, improving education for health care providers, and improving access to long-term care services.

Legislation currently under consideration in the House and Senate, the "Pediatric, Adolescent, and Young Adult Cancer Survivorship Research and Quality of Life Act of 2007," or Childhood Cancer Survivorship Act, addresses many of the IOM's recommendations by establishing:

- Cancer survivorship programs through the National Institutes of Health that include grants to address health disparities in childhood cancer survivorship.
- Clinics for comprehensive long-term follow-up services for childhood cancer survivors.
- Grants to improve access to care for survivors of childhood cancer.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cancer control programs that provide guidance to states and encourage them to improve systems of care for survivors of childhood cancer.

[Insert information about how legislation would affect Organization's constituents].

The Alliance for Childhood Cancer of which **[Organization]** is a member, strongly supports this legislation and commends the bills' sponsors, Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and

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Representatives Hilda L. Solis (D-CA) and Mary Bono Mack (R-CA), for taking crucial steps will improve the health of so many children who have survived cancer.

All children deserve the best health care possible. Children who have already fought cancer need assurance that they will get the medical care that they need maintain their health and well being for the rest of their lives. Contact your Members of Congress and encourage them to support the Childhood Cancer Survivorship Act, to make sure childhood cancer survivors become healthy and happy adults.