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NYSCOP Opposes Bill to Establish Parity between Intravenous and Oral Chemotherapy Treatments

Statement from Deborah Fasser, NYSCOP spokeswoman.

Note: The New York State Legislature is currently advancing legislation that would require health insurance plans to cover orally administered chemotherapy treatment “no less favorably” than intravenously administered or injected chemotherapy treatments.

“Current law requires coverage for all chemotherapy treatments, intravenous or oral, if it is appropriate for care. This requirement is ensured through New York’s landmark External Review Law, where independent experts determine whether proposed treatment is medically necessary and consistent with sound medical judgment. This legislation takes the treatment decision out of the hands of providers and health plans, and mandates oral chemotherapy coverage as interchangeable with intravenously administered or injected chemotherapy treatments, regardless of whether it is the proper course of care.

Furthermore, as drafted, this legislation would limit important patient safeguards. According to a recent study conducted by the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and published in the British Medical Journal, ‘few of the safeguards routinely used for infusion chemotherapy have been adopted for oral chemotherapy at U.S. cancer centers. There is currently no consensus at these centers in regard to safe medication practices for oral chemotherapy.’

This legislation disregards important consumer protections and simply caters to special interests. Oral chemotherapy is an important treatment option. However, mandating equal treatment as intravenous use circumvents the current law that ensures appropriate quality of care standards.”

The New York State Conference of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans (NYSCOP) is a partnership of Rochester-based Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield and New York City-based Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield. Together, the two health insurance plans provide comprehensive health coverage for millions of New Yorkers and are dedicated to educating the public through in-depth research and analysis of the cost, access and quality of health care.