

May 28, 2019

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Elijah Cummings
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ben Cardin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Van Hollen and Cardin and Representatives Cummings, Sarbanes, and Ruppersberger:

The undersigned organizations, representing patients, cancer care providers, and researchers, are writing to endorse the Henrietta Lacks Enhancing Cancer Research Act of 2019 (S. 946/HR 1966). Clinical trials are vitally important for advancing our knowledge of cancer and cancer treatments and providing patients with potentially life-saving treatment options. We commend your efforts – through a comprehensive review by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) – to understand the reasons for unequal access to cancer trials by racial and ethnic minorities and Americans who live in rural areas, are old and are poor.

We are pleased that this legislation is named for Henrietta Lacks, as her name reflects the altruism of clinical trials enrollees, who typically dedicate considerable time and effort to clinical trials participation even as they receive access to investigational agents. The ability to enroll in a clinical trial should be offered equally to minority patients, those in rural areas, and those who are old and poor. We look forward to the analysis and recommendations from GAO and the reforms that may follow the study recommendations.

Our organizations have been engaged for some time in a wide range of efforts to improve the cancer clinical trial enterprise. We have pursued policies to guarantee payment for routine patient care costs for those enrolled in trials, improve enrollment criteria in order to foster greater trials participation, enhance the efficiency of clinical trials design, and strengthen the regulatory review of trials. Our fundamental goals have been to enhance patient care through clinical trials enrollment and speed the development of new treatments.

We strongly support your efforts to improve access to care in clinical trials by understanding and addressing the barriers to clinical trials enrollment that some Americans face.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council