



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph E. Robach

## Senate Passes Bill Enabling Coverage for Oral Chemotherapy

JOSEPH E. ROBACH June 21, 2011

| ISSUE: **HEALTH**

The New York State Senate passed a bill to potentially save chemotherapy patients thousands of dollars in pharmaceutical costs by ensuring that chemotherapy treatment, no matter how administered, is covered equally by insurance companies. The bill (S.3988), sponsored by Senator Andrew Lanza (R-C, Staten Island), would help patients by enabling oral chemotherapy – a treatment in pill form - to be covered by insurance as a chemotherapy treatment.

“There is absolutely no reason why life-saving medicines should be covered differently simply because of the way they are administered,” said Senator Lanza. “This bill is about keeping up with the times and the changing face of medicine.”

“We are fortunate to live in an age when advancements are constantly evolving to make medical treatments easier and more effective,” Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. “However, changes are needed to address the disparity in how treatments can be administered and paid for. This is an important quality-of-life issue for those needing chemotherapy.”

Many of the emerging and most effective cancer therapies are available only in pill form. A patient is able to undergo chemotherapy by taking a pill in the comfort of their own home

instead of traveling to a hospital for the traditional intravenous or injectable form of chemotherapy that is most commonly thought of when chemotherapy is discussed. In addition to the convenience of receiving the treatment in their own home, some patients also benefit by experiencing fewer side effects than traditional chemotherapy.

Currently, many oral drugs are defined by insurance companies as a prescription drug treatment, leaving patients unable to get the treatment covered as a traditional chemotherapy treatment. This often results in patients paying thousands of dollars out of pocket because it is listed in the highest drug price category. If they are unable to pay for the drug, the oral chemotherapy option and its benefits are not accessible to the patient.

This bill ends the cost discrepancy by requiring oral chemotherapies to be covered by insurance at a cost equal to intravenously-delivered chemotherapies.

The bill will be sent to the Assembly.