



January 29, 2024

Delegate Maldonado
Chair, House Labor and Commerce – Subcommittee #1
Virginia General Assembly Building
923 E. Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Re: HB560

Dear Chair Maldonado and members of the Committee:

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) appreciates the opportunity to comment on HB560, which requires coverage for infertility treatment, including fertility preservation procedures to be included in the Essential Health Benefit plan selection of 2025. We thank Delegate Helmer for his leadership on this issue.

LLS views HB560 as a medically responsible and compassionate opportunity to help blood cancer survivors preserve parenting options. LLS supports the intent of this legislation and urges your committee to support this legislation's fertility preservation provisions and protect as many Virginians as possible, as thoroughly as possible.

The mission of LLS is to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, and myeloma and improve the quality of life of people living with blood cancer, and their families. Blood cancers are among the most common types of cancer diagnosed in children and young adults. Leukemia alone accounts for nearly a quarter of all cancers diagnosed in people under age 20.ⁱ

When first diagnosed with blood cancer, a patient's primary concern will be their upcoming treatment and long-term survival. They may not be thinking about whether they can or want to have children in the future – or how their treatment could impact their chances of conception. The good news is that advancements in research and treatment of blood cancers have led to significant improvements in survival rates for pediatric cancer patients.

However, fertility preservation is an essential consideration for pediatric and young adult blood cancer survivors. Blood cancers and their treatments, particularly cell transplants, carry a significant risk of infertility.ⁱⁱ Treatment must begin quickly, which leaves patients with a difficult choice and little time to appeal to insurers for coverage after a denial of coverage.

Even with comprehensive insurance coverage, blood cancer patients can face significant treatment costs, particularly in the twelve months following diagnosis.ⁱⁱⁱ No patient, or parents of a young patient, should be put into a position where they must weigh the costs of fertility preservation services – needed only because of their cancer treatment – against the costs of the treatment itself.

LLS encourages your committee to report HB560 to provide Virginians with coverage for these services as recognized by professional medical organizations such as the American Society of Clinical Oncology or the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. This coverage should be made available to all enrollees whose condition or treatment is recognized by professional medical organizations as having the potential to impair fertility.

Cancer treatment is stressful enough without being compounded by the pain and regret of lost fertility. LLS hopes the committee will support access to affordable fertility preservation services in HB560 as part of a suite of essential patient care. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

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ⁱ “Childhood Blood Cancer Facts and Statistics.” The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Available at: <https://www.lls.org/facts-and-statistics/overview/childhood-blood-cancer-facts-and-statistics>

ⁱⁱ Loren, Alison W., and S. Senapati, “Fertility preservation in patients with hematologic malignancies and recipients of hematopoietic cell transplants.” *Blood*, 2019. Available at: <https://ashpublications.org/blood/article/134/9/746/260765/Fertility-preservation-in-patients-with>.

ⁱⁱⁱ “The Cost Burden of Blood Cancer Care.” Milliman Inc. for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. October 2018. Available at: <https://www.lls.org/sites/default/files/Milliman%20study%20cost%20burden%20of%20blood%20cancer%20care.pdf>