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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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VAN ROY'S VIEWS

Make Clinical Trials Available for Cancer Patients in Wisconsin

It goes without saying that being diagnosed with cancer or having a loved one diagnosed is a traumatic and life-altering event. When someone is diagnosed with cancer there are immediately questions about treatment options and care. This year some 26,000 Wisconsinites will be diagnosed with cancer and for most of them, entering into a clinical trial might be their best bet for treatment. Unfortunately, many thousands of these victims will not have access to clinical trials because their insurance companies could refuse to pay the routine costs of care involved with their treatment.

This summer several of my constituents who volunteer for the American Cancer Society contacted me about this problem. More importantly they brought a solution to my attention with a piece of legislation now referred to as "The Cancer Patient Protection Act." This bill will ensure that clinical trial participants receive the same coverage for their routine care that they'd get if they chose a standard treatment. The researchers conducting the trials will cover the rest of the costs as they already do under current practices.

Currently, less than 3% of cancer patients enter into clinical trials, which means that the overwhelming majority of cancer patients are not receiving the most cutting edge treatments possible. Worse yet, scientific progress towards new potential treatments or cures is slowed. A recent Harris poll found that 71% of cancer patients cited concerns over insurance coverage as a top reason why they were not participating in clinical trials. This legislation will increase the number of cancer patients in Brown County who can receive state-of-the-art therapy while advancing medical knowledge for the benefit of everyone.

My colleagues and I on the Assembly Insurance Committee have worked with the insurance industry, oncologists, and cancer patients to mold this legislation into a workable plan for all parties involved. The Cancer Patient Protection Act is expected to pass the State Senate this week and will then move onto the Assembly where I will work to ensure its swift passage.

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