

EMBARGOED UNTIL: AUGUST 6, 2015, 12:01 a.m. EDT

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Denise Dunlap Billings

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Phone: 615-483-0201

Email: denise.billings@cancer.org



Mississippi Falling Short on Cancer-Fighting Public Policies

Mississippi Lawmakers Have Opportunities to Save Lives and Money

Jackson, Miss. – August 6, 2015 – Mississippi is falling short when it comes to supporting policies and passing legislation to prevent and reduce suffering and death from cancer. According to the latest edition of *How Do You Measure Up?: A Progress Report on State Legislative Activity to Reduce Cancer Incidence and Mortality*, Mississippi measured up to policy recommendations in none of the nine issue areas ranked. The report was released today by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN).

“We’ve made tremendous progress in the way we diagnose and treat cancer across the country. But to leverage this progress, Mississippi legislators must take advantage of the opportunities to pass evidence-based laws and policies that are proven to save lives and money,” said Kimberly Hughes, Mississippi government relations director. “In Mississippi alone in 2015, 16,260 people will be diagnosed with cancer and 6,360 will die from it. We can’t wait to take action when the stakes are that high. This report outlines ways lawmakers can make a difference by emphasizing cancer prevention, curbing tobacco use and prioritizing quality of life for patients and their families.”

How Do You Measure Up? rates states in nine specific areas of public policy that can help fight cancer, including smoke-free laws, tobacco tax levels, funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs and cessation coverage under Medicaid, funding for cancer screening programs and restricting indoor tanning devices for minors. The report also looks at whether or not a state has said yes to federal funds available to increase access to care through its Medicaid program, has passed policies proven to increase patient quality of life and offers a well-balanced approach to pain medications.

Additionally, the report offers a blueprint for states to effectively implement provisions of the health care law in a way that benefits cancer patients and their families, and discusses the negative financial impact if Mississippi fails to take action on cancer-fighting policy. Passing and implementing the policy recommendations in the report would not only save lives in Mississippi, but also save millions in long-term health care costs and in some cases would even generate additional, much-needed revenue.

A color-coded system classifies how well a state is doing in each issue. Green shows that a state has adopted evidence-based policies and best practices; yellow indicates moderate movement toward the benchmark and red shows where states are falling short.

How Mississippi Measures Up:

Cigarette Tax Rates	Red
Smoke-free Laws	Red
Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program Funding	Yellow
Medicaid Coverage of Tobacco Cessation Services	Red
Indoor Tanning Device Restrictions	Red
Increased Access to Medicaid	Red
Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Funding	Red
Access to Palliative Care	Red

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Many communities across the state are passing smoke-free workplace ordinances, including the Gulf Coast but more work is still needed.

“As advocates, we’ve worked hard to educate Mississippians about ways to prevent and treat cancer, but our voice is not enough if state and local policymakers don’t take action to fund and implement state policies and programs that are proven to save lives,” said Hughes.

Nationally, the report finds that only three states meet six out of the nine benchmarks measured. While 25 states and the District of Columbia are making progress in enacting and strengthening policies that fight cancer, unfortunately the remaining 25 states are falling short and no state meets seven or more benchmarks. No state received a green rating in more than six categories measure.

To view the complete report and details on Mississippi’s grades, visit www.acscan.org.

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit www.acscan.org.

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