

# THE ORAL HEALTH AND CANCER RIGHTS ACT



## Why covered care matters

The complications of oral and pharynx cancers extend far beyond treatment. The effects of oral and pharynx cancers can severely inhibit a person's ability to breathe, eat, and speak. Because the mouth is one of our main connections to the world around us, this can lead to physical, psychological, and economic concerns such as the inability to swallow, feelings of embarrassment and depression, and the inability to get a job, all having a direct, negative impact on a person's quality of life.

Oral health and rehabilitative care can drastically improve these complications, yet most insurance companies do not provide coverage for oral health services. The Oral Health and Cancer Rights Act would provide needed coverage for these vital services as part of a patient's cancer care or survivorship plan.

### ORAL CANCERS ARE ON THE RISE IN WV

WV ranked above the nation for new cancer cases:



**ORAL & PHARYNX**



**LUNG & BRONCHUS**



**LARYNGEAL & ESOPHAGEAL**

### BEYOND TREATMENT: THE LIVES CHANGED BY ORAL CANCER



**OF ORAL CANCER PATIENTS:**

**require dental extractions\***

*\*Typically not covered by most insurances, causing a delay in cancer treatments and an increase in complications.*

**will die of a complication caused by their cancer\*\***

*\*\*Complications include, but are not limited to, the inability to chew, eat, swallow, or speak.*

According to Linda A. Lilly, who suffered from oral cancer and received tongue surgery and neck surgery,

*"... in May of 2022, I had to undergo neck dissection surgery to remove a cancerous lump that I had discovered at the side of my jaw. I went to surgery as a normal woman; I emerged as a disabled woman who cannot eat or drink except for a gastric feeding tube, cannot speak normally, and cannot sing..."*

To help offset the harmful impact of oral cancers, the Oral Health and Cancer Rights Act would require coverage for oral health and rehabilitation services, including prostheses, medical devices, rehabilitation, and treatment. Based on the already successful federal Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998, **THIS BILL WOULD HELP RESTORE PATIENT DIGNITY, IMPROVE ECONOMIC IMPACTS, AND SAVE LIVES.**

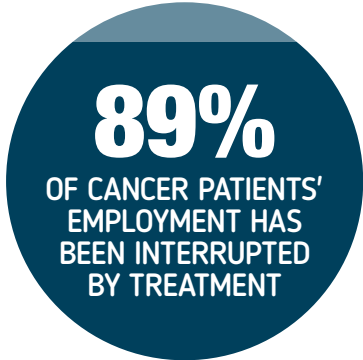


Linda A. Lilly  
Oral Cancer Patient

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNCOVERED CARE

Beyond the often-debilitating consequences of cancer treatment, oral health and rehabilitative care are not covered by most insurance, creating significant burdens to patients and an impact on the state economy.

THOSE WITH ORAL CANCERS PAY **7X MORE** IN OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS THAN THOSE WITH OTHER TYPES OF CANCERS



**INTERRUPTIONS AND LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT WILL DIRECTLY IMPACT THE STATE'S BUYING POWER, STATE TAX REVENUE, AND WORKFORCE FROM LOSS OF JOBS.**

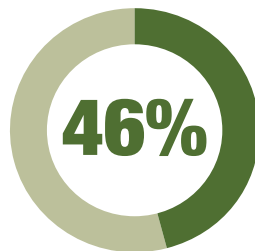
## ORAL HEALTH NEEDS ESCALATE OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS FOR PEOPLE WITH MEDICAID

Jim is a 43-year-old man with Stage III oropharyngeal cancer. He makes \$840 a month and has WV Medicaid. Medicaid currently covers \$1,000.00 of oral health needs for adults. A swallowing evaluation is a covered service, but Jim's cancer treatment requires three extractions, tobacco counseling, and nutritional supplementation and counseling. None of these services are currently covered by insurance. Without the Oral Health and Cancer Rights Act, Jim can expect distressing out-of-pocket costs.



JIM'S OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES IN THE FIRST YEAR AFTER DIAGNOSIS FOR CANCER-RELATED ORAL HEALTH NEEDS TOTAL

**\$4,600**



OF JIM'S ANNUAL INCOME WILL BE SPENT IN THE FIRST YEAR JUST TO COVER THE OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES FOR HIS CANCER-RELATED ORAL HEALTH NEEDS.

**A CALL FOR ACTION**

The extensive impact of oral and pharynx cancers and treatments places a significant burden on West Virginians and their families — physically, mentally, and financially. The Oral Health and Cancer Rights Act will help to reduce this burden and provide adequate coverage for West Virginians, ultimately creating a better quality of life for our residents.