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Oregon & Southwest Washington Breast Cancer Advocates Call on Congress to Maintain Commitment to Research Funding, Breast Health Care and Treatment Access

Susan G. Komen Advocates Stress Importance of Access to Cancer Screening, Ensuring Treatment Parity

Portland, Oregon. (April 22, 2016) – Local breast cancer survivors and advocates representing Susan G. Komen Oregon and Southwest Washington traveled to the nation's capital April 14, joining over a hundred breast cancer advocates from across the country to remind our nation's leaders of the importance of federal cancer research funding and access to cancer screening programs — and to call on policy makers to ensure parity of insurance coverage between oral chemotherapy and traditional IV treatments.

"As the health care system continues to evolve, we cannot forget that many people continue to rely on vital safety net programs, such as the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program," said Andrew Asato, CEO. "We cannot step back from our commitment to ensuring access to quality breast cancer screening and treatment."

While on Capitol Hill for the day, the Oregon and SW Washington delegation met with Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici and Congressman Kurt Schrader, and with staff of Congressmen Earl Blumenauer and Peter DeFazio, as well as with staff from the offices of Senator Jeff Merkley and Senator Ron Wyden.

They urged lawmakers to invest in biomedical research by increasing funding for the National Institutes of Health to \$34.5 billion, including \$5.9 billion for the National Cancer Institute, in FY2017.

In addition to research, the Komen representatives stressed the importance of maintaining the government's commitment to vital safety-net programs, such as the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. They also stressed the importance of ensuring parity between the way insurance covers oral chemotherapy, which often is governed by prescription drug benefit rules, and traditional IV treatments, which often have lower co-pays.

"Many new cancer drugs are out of reach for patients because of outdated insurance rules that class them as specialty drugs under their prescription drug benefits, requiring significant out-of-pocket costs for patients. Conversely, IV treatments fall under the patient's medical benefits since they are administered at the hospital, and involve lower cost-sharing," said Asato. "Treatment decisions should be made by patients and their doctor based on what is the best medical option – not by which treatment protocol is less likely to bankrupt them based on insurance rules that haven't kept pace with science." Oregon is fortunate that Senator Merkley and Congressmen Blumenauer, DeFazio, and Walden have already signed on as co-sponsors of the Cancer Drug Coverage Parity Act. "We look forward to Senator Wyden, Congresswoman Bonamici, Congresswoman Jaime Herrera-Butler, and Congressman Schrader joining their colleagues in co-sponsoring this important piece of legislation," added Asato.

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About Susan G. Komen Oregon and SW Washington

In 25 years, the local organization has funneled nearly \$19.8 million into programs that prioritize the importance of improving and building on the quality of life for survivors, emphasize the value of early detection and screenings, as well as financial assistance for access to treatment. Another \$11.9 million has been dedicated to local cutting edge research. More information is available at KomenOregon.org.

About Susan G. Komen

Susan G. Komen is the world's largest breast cancer organization, funding more breast cancer research than any other nonprofit while providing real-time help to those facing the disease. Nationally, since its founding in 1982, Komen has funded \$2.6 billion in funding to research, screening, education, treatment and psychosocial support programs serving millions of people in more than 30 countries worldwide.

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