Letter to New Members of Congress:

Congratulations on becoming a member of the United States [Senate or House of Representatives] and best wishes for a productive and successful 116th Congress. As a member of Congress, you will set public health policy that will critically impact the lives of the 1.73 million Americans diagnosed with cancer this year, along with the estimated 15.5 million cancer survivors in the United States. These trends are expected to increase in the coming years. Your health policy decisions will impact the well-being of these current cancer patients and survivors.

The cancer registry system is one of the most fundamental ways public health professionals, physicians, and researchers understand and address cancer. We wanted to ensure you were aware of this important public health system. Cancer registrars are data information specialists that capture data to describe the complete history, diagnosis, treatment, and health status for every cancer patient in the United States. The information they gather and curate is then reported to state and territorial central cancer registries, as required by law, and then to the federal government, specifically, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Cancer Institute. The central cancer registries are part of a network of cancer information systems that collect, manage, store, maintain, and analyze data on cancer patients and survivors that provides essential information to the public, healthcare providers, researchers, policy makers, and public health officials to better monitor cancer trends, advance cancer treatments, conduct research, improve cancer prevention and screening programs, and inform the public about progress in the fight against cancer.

In summary, the work of cancer registrars and central cancer registries provide all the information needed to monitor the occurrence of cancer from year to year, and our progress toward controlling and preventing this disease. If you or your staff would like more information about the cancer registry system, please feel free to contact us.

Thank you for the leadership you will provide on fighting cancer.

Sincerely yours,

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