Alliance for Childhood Cancer

PEDIATRIC CANCER DRUG SUPPLY ACT

Approximately 1 in 263 children in the U.S. are diagnosed with cancer before their 20th birthday. Unfortunately, cancer remains the most common cause of death by disease among children in the United States. While the childhood cancer community has been experiencing oncology drug shortages for more than a decade, today’s shortages are the worst we’ve seen. These shortages are caused by a multitude of factors, including quality issues, manufacturer business decisions, disruptions to raw ingredients and excipient supplies, and natural disasters and other emergencies that take place in countries that house critical drug manufacturing facilities. Exacerbating these issues is a fragile economic model that does not encourage the development of resiliency or manufacturing upgrades that could otherwise mitigate some of these factors.

Drug shortages significantly impact children with cancer and the health care professionals who care for them. Unfortunately, shortages of life-saving and live-extending drugs in childhood cancer care, many of which are also used in adult care, often do not have alternative treatments. As a result, some providers are forced to prioritize some patients over others, delaying treatment for children and disrupting clinical trials.

The Pediatric Cancer Drug Supply Act of 2024 (H.R. 6963) is a step toward mitigating shortages of lifesaving and life-extending childhood cancer drugs by creating a pilot program to establish and maintain a 6-month reserve supply of essential childhood cancer chemotherapy drugs. By creating a reserve of critical pediatric chemotherapeutic drugs, this bill ensures children can continue to have access to the medications they need during an acute, unexpected disruption to the supply chain while broader and longer-term policies are being enacted that would address underlying causes of these recurrent shortages.