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Statement of Hilary Schneider, State Director of Government Relations and Advocacy for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

Cover Maine Now! Press Conference and Petition Delivery

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Good morning.

My name is Hilary Schneider; I am the State Director of Government Relations and Advocacy for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network – the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate organization of the American Cancer Society.

We support taking full advantage of the federal dollars being offered to the State of Maine to provide access to lifesaving health care coverage to nearly 70,000 thousand Mainers as this is critical to our efforts of eliminating cancer as a major health problem.

One in two men and one in three women will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. It is estimated that more than 9,100 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed and more than 3,200 Mainers will lose their fight against cancer in 2013, making it the leading cause of death in the state.

ACS CAN's goal, to reduce and eliminate cancer morbidity and mortality, cannot be realized without adequate health care access.

Access to adequate and affordable healthcare is one of the most effective ways to prevent and detect cancer early, treat cancer effectively and bolster the quality of life of patients enduring cancer treatment. Accepting federal funds will ensure that nearly 70,000 Mainers will live longer and healthier lives.

The American Cancer Society staff and cancer center partners here in Maine work with patients every day who worry about how they are going to pay their medical bills, which takes away from their ability to focus on fighting cancer. The sad truth is that these patients and their families are making decisions about their care based on what they can afford, instead of what is best for their health.

Thousands of hard-working, low-income Mainers continue to lack access to healthcare coverage. Increasing access to coverage for those at or below 138% of the Federal Poverty Level will ensure that Maine families have access to cancer prevention and early detection services.

Accepting the federal funds already set aside for Maine will allow more Mainers to see a doctor regularly, access preventive services such as pap smears, mammograms and smoking cessation aids and avoid unnecessary visits to the emergency department. Access to these critical services enhances the likelihood of detecting cancer at an earlier, more curable and much less expensive stage. Low-income Maine families deserve the security of quality health coverage to get lifesaving care when they need it.

Today we are delivering nearly 3000 petitions signed by Maine people throughout the state to Legislative leaders to remind them of the overwhelming support for accepting federal funds and that health and well-being of nearly 70,000 Mainers is on the line. And, for those who are diagnosed with cancer, it could mean the difference between life and death.

Whether or not Maine should accept federal funds has been debated, researched and analyzed for the last eight weeks. The time is now. We strongly encourage policy makers to accept the funds. By doing so nearly 70,000 individuals will gain access to timely, appropriate and affordable health care coverage. This will greatly assist in the effort to eliminate cancer as a major health problem in our State.

Thank you.