



February 12, 2025

Vermont Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

Dear Senator Lyons and esteemed members of the Committee on Health and Welfare,

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is pleased to submit the following testimony to the Vermont Senate Committee on Health and Welfare **supporting S27, An act relating to medical debt relief and excluding medical debt from credit reports.**

At LLS, our mission is to cure blood cancers and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. LLS exists to find cures, ensure treatment access, and improve survivorship for blood cancer patients. The average cost in the first year of treatment for a blood cancer patient averages \$470,000.

LLS released a poll¹ last October, over 90% of U.S. adults agreed that elected officials should pass policies that protect people with serious illnesses like cancer from medical debt and harassment from collection agencies. LLS is leading or part of coalitions working on medical debt legislation in dozens of states nationwide, specifically in many of the other northeast states, RI, MA, ME, CT, NJ, NY, and PA, on behalf of our patients and their families.

The Consumer Protection Financial Bureau (CFPB), in a recently released report² determined that medical debt is the #1 reason for individual bankruptcy and that medical debt is the least predictive indicator of future repayment of all debt.

Medical debt, which is debt that is not a willing choice and is sometimes made under the duress of the choice of life or death, is widely accepted to have the most mistakes due to lack of notification, billing errors, coding errors, and difficulty in appealing. This often inaccurate medical debt reported on credit reports, begins the downward spiral of negative consequences in securing future employment, housing, and other credit opportunities that affect generations. Just two weeks ago, the CFPB urged several states across the country to continue passing medical debt policies at the state level, most notably the prohibition of reporting medical debt to credit bureaus.

When patients can afford their medical treatment, health outcomes improve.

LLS urges the committee to pass S27 and I'm happy to answer your questions about this bill or experiences in other states.

Sincerely,
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Director, Northeast State Government Affairs
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¹ <https://www.lls.org/news/nearly-1-2-patients-medical-debt-feel-trapped-new-poll-leading-healthcare-orgs-finds>

² <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/newsroom/cfpb-estimates-88-billion-in-medical-bills-on-credit-reports/>