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February 10, 2017

The Honorable Ted Cruz
404 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cruz,

Palliative care was mentioned during your recent CNN Town Hall Debate. It was not accurately portrayed, and therefore we would like to share with you how palliative care is making a real difference in the lives of millions of Americans.

As an interdisciplinary model of care, palliative care's aim is to prevent and treat the debilitating effects of serious and chronic illness, such as cancer, cardiac disease, respiratory disease, kidney failure, Alzheimer's, AIDS, ALS, and MS. It can be provided from the time of diagnosis and involves the relief of pain and other symptoms that cause discomfort, such as shortness of breath, unrelenting nausea, etc. In practice, this involves detailed and skilled communication with patients and families to elicit goals and preferences; expert assessment and management of physical, psychological, and other sources of distress; and coordination of care across the multiple settings (e.g., hospital, post-acute care, ambulatory clinics, home) that patients traverse throughout the course of a serious illness.

The key features and benefits of palliative care include the following:

- It is specialized clinical care for people living with serious illness.
- It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness.
- The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family.
- It is provided by a team of specialists who work together with a patient's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support.
- It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment.

By its very nature, palliative care is patient-centered care.

Despite a high intensity of medical treatment, many seriously ill individuals still experience troubling symptoms, unmet psychological and personal care needs, fragmented care, poor communication with their health care providers, and enormous strains on their family caregivers. Numerous studies have shown that adding palliative care can improve pain and symptom control, quality of life, patient and family satisfaction and even survival.

A 2010 study published by the *New England Journal of Medicine* (Temel et al.) found that among patients with non-small-cell lung cancer, those who received palliative care alongside the best cancer care lived, on average, almost two months longer than those who did not receive palliative care. Researchers also found that the patients receiving palliative care reported a higher quality of life through the final course of their illness.

As physicians, nurses, chaplains and social workers, we provide high quality palliative care to our nation's sickest and most vulnerable patients. We would be happy to connect you to any of the numerous palliative care programs operating in your home state of Texas, so you can see first-hand how palliative care improves the lives of patients, families and caregivers. In the meantime, the leadership of the undersigned organizations stands ready to be a resource for you on healthcare policy and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the importance of strengthening access to it within the U.S. health care system. Please contact Amy Melnick, Executive Director, at 202.306.3590 or amym@nationalcoalitionhpc.org and she can arrange a meeting with you and Coalition leaders and experts in the field.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
Association of Professional Chaplains
Center to Advance Palliative Care
HealthCare Chaplaincy Network
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
National Palliative Care Research Center
Social Work Hospice and Palliative Care Network