

Viral Hepatitis Testing Legislation Introduced in Congress

On Thursday, December 12, 2013, Representative Bill Cassidy (R-LA) introduced H.R. 3723, the Viral Hepatitis Testing Act of 2013. Representatives Charles Dent (R-PA) and Brett Guthrie (R-KY) signed on as original co-sponsors. This bill would provide \$80 million over three years to expand hepatitis B and C education, testing and linkage to care services, with a priority of reaching those most at risk. It also would establish a public-private partnership that would generate additional revenue for viral hepatitis services. The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable thanks Representative Cassidy for his leadership and commitment to addressing the viral hepatitis crisis by introducing this bill. We also thank Representatives Dent and Guthrie for their strong support.

Millions of Americans are unaware that they have chronic hepatitis B and/or C, leaving them at great risk for advanced liver disease, liver cancer, or in need of a liver transplant. The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have both recently issued updated hepatitis C testing recommendations calling on all of those at risk to be tested and for everyone born between 1945 and 1965 (“Baby Boomers”) to receive a one-time hepatitis C antibody test. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently approved promising new hepatitis C treatments with more expected to be on the market soon. Asian Americans are disproportionately impacted by hepatitis B, with one in twelve Asian Americans having chronic hepatitis B, yet the majority remain unaware of their infection. H.R. 2723 has the potential to provide urgently needed funding for targeted viral hepatitis testing so that those most at risk have the opportunity to know their status and to be linked to lifesaving care and treatment.

On Tuesday, December 17, 2013, Representative Mike Honda (D-CA), released a statement that he will work with Representative Cassidy to find a bipartisan agreement that will ensure passage of the legislation. NVHR will work with our champions in Congress to help advance this critical legislation. Without swift and bold action to fund viral hepatitis testing services now, the human and financial costs of treating people with unnecessary advanced liver disease will be staggering.

For more information, please contact Ryan Clary, NVHR's Director of Public Policy, rclary@nvhr.org or [\(415\) 235-8593](tel:(415)235-8593).

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