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Supreme Court Ruling Preserves Critical Patient Protections for Families Affected by Cancer

Statement of John R. Seffrin, PhD, Chief Executive Officer of the American Cancer Society and American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)

WASHINGTON – June 28, 2012 – “The U.S. Supreme Court today upheld the constitutionality of provisions of the Affordable Care Act that are critical to ensuring that people with cancer and other life-threatening chronic diseases can access quality, affordable health care.

“The ruling is a victory for people with cancer and their families nationwide, who for decades have been denied health coverage, charged far more than they can afford for lifesaving care and forced to spend their life savings on necessary treatment, simply because they have a pre-existing condition.

“The decision ensures that critical patient protections benefitting cancer patients and survivors will be implemented, such as those prohibiting insurance companies from denying coverage to people with a pre-existing condition, requiring insurers to provide consumers with easy-to-understand summaries about their coverage and requiring health plans in the individual market to offer essential benefits needed to prevent and treat a serious condition such as cancer.

“The ruling also preserves vital provisions that are already improving the ability of people with cancer and their families to access needed care by ensuring that proven preventive services such as mammograms and colonoscopies are offered at no cost to patients, eliminating arbitrary dollar limits on coverage that can suddenly terminate care and prohibiting insurance companies from unfairly revoking coverage when a person gets sick.

“The decision ensures that patients in every state will have access to an online marketplace where they can easily compare quality health plans and choose the one that is best for them and their families. The ruling also will sustain comprehensive nationwide efforts to refocus the health care system on disease prevention by encouraging people to get screened for cancer and other serious diseases and adopt healthier lifestyles.

“ACS CAN is reviewing the Court’s ruling on Medicaid, but we are concerned that the decision may limit the expansion of quality coverage to some of our nation’s most vulnerable citizens. We hope that ultimately, the decision will ensure access to quality health coverage through Medicaid for all low-income and disabled Americans with cancer or at risk for cancer. For many hard-working Americans who have lost their health insurance because they are too ill to work or who have exhausted their savings, Medicaid coverage will provide critical access to proven preventive services and lifesaving treatments.

“Access to care saves lives. Scientific research from the American Cancer Society has shown that people without health coverage are more likely than those with private insurance to be diagnosed with cancer at its more advanced stages and less likely to survive the disease.

“Now that the Supreme Court has ruled, it is time for all of our elected officials to work together in a bipartisan effort to implement the health care law as strongly as possible for cancer patients, survivors, and their families.”

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary

power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit www.acscan.org.

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