OVERVIEW
ASCO has endorsed the Cancer Drug Coverage Parity Act of 2015 (H.R. 2739/S. 1566), introduced by Reps. Leonard Lance (R-NJ) and Brian Higgins (D-NY) and Sens. Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Al Franken (D-MN), requiring private health insurance plans offering intravenous chemotherapy benefits to provide parity for orally administered and self-injectable anticancer medications.

BACKGROUND
Due to scientific advances in recent years, oncologists are increasingly able to treat their patients with orally administered medications instead of medications given intravenously. Oral cancer drugs can provide significant clinical advantages over more traditional intravenous and injected anticancer medications. In some instances, they may represent the only or best treatment option.

However, some health plans impose significantly higher cost sharing requirements—copays, coinsurance and other mechanisms—on cancer patients for orally administered medications than for those injected or administered intravenously. This is due to the fact that most traditional anticancer medications are often covered under the medical benefit of most insurance plans, while oral anticancer medications are covered under the prescription drug benefit. Higher cost sharing requirements create significant financial barriers for cancer patients who need access to these critical, life-enhancing oral anticancer medications.

The imposition of high cost-sharing requirements is increasingly becoming a barrier to care for cancer patients. This practice is costing patients hundreds, sometimes thousands, of dollars each month for a single medication. In some cases, cancer patients are simply unable to afford the appropriate treatment, placing them at risk of a less successful outcome, or a more debilitating treatment regimen. This is not an issue of convenience for the cancer patient or health care provider.

REQUEST
Cosponsor the Cancer Drug Coverage Parity Act, H.R. 2739/S. 1566, legislation that seeks to resolve the so-called "oral parity" issue by requiring private health insurance plans offering intravenous cancer drug benefits to provide parity for orally administered and self-injectable cancer drugs.