TuSalud

Senators Introduce Cure Hepatitis C Act to Increase Access to Treatment

The bipartisan legislation could save an estimated 24,000 lives and $18 billion in healthcare costs over the next 10 years.

June 4, 2025 By Liz Highleyman

Senator Bill Cassidy, MD (R-La.)—one of four medical doctors serving in the Senate—and Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) yesterday introduced bipartisan legislation that aims to help more Americans access lifesaving treatment for hepatitis C.

"We can virtually eliminate hepatitis C in a fiscally responsible way," Cassidy said in a news release. "Curing hepatitis C makes Americans healthy again while also saving the federal government billions by eliminating the need for chronic care. It's a win for patients, and it's a win for the taxpayers."

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a blood-borne infection that can be transmitted via shared needles for drug injection, contaminated medical or tattooing equipment, via sex and from mother to child during pregnancy or delivery. Over time, chronic hepatitis C can lead to serious complications, including cirrhosis, liver cancer and the need for a liver transplant.

Modern HCV antiviral medications are highly effective, curing more than 95% of people who complete treatment. Successful treatment prevents both disease progression and onward transmission of the virus, which could end hepatitis C as a public health threat. But still, many people living with HCV are unaware of their status, and most people who could benefit from treatment are not getting it.

The American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases and the Infectious Diseases Society of America recommend treatment for everyone with acute or chronic HCV infection, except those with a short life expectancy. But due to the high cost of the medications, some jurisdictions have limited treatment to those with advanced liver fibrosis, those with a period of sobriety from drugs or alcohol or those who receive care from liver disease specialists.

The Cure Hepatitis C Act aims to expand treatment access for low-income and "hard-to-reach" individuals. The bill will establish a voluntary drug subscription model to connect people with HCV to treatment based on a successful pilot program in Louisiana and programs in other countries.

The five-year subscription model allows the federal government to purchase hepatitis C medications through a competitive bidding process between the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services and pharmaceutical manufacturers. People who receive care through the Indian Health Service or federal correctional facilities will have access to the drugs, and state Medicaid programs and prison systems may opt in.

“Hepatitis C claims thousands of American lives every year—but we have a proven model that can make this preventable public health crisis a thing of the past,” Van Hollen said. “Our bipartisan legislation offers a solution towards ensuring communities most at risk have access to the highly effective treatments that are available—saving lives while also saving billions in taxpayer dollars that are currently spent on costly chronic care.”

Big news in the fight to #EndHepC in the United States!

Sens. Cassidy (R-LA) & Van Hollen (D-MD) just introduced the Cure Hepatitis C Act—expanding testing & curative treatment to save 24K lives and $18B over 10 years. #PublicHealth #EndHepatitisC pic.twitter.com/JMQjbc37BZ

— Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination (@GlobalHep) June 4, 2025

Advocates lauded the proposed legislation and urged its swift passage.

“With the passage of this legislation, we in the United States can quickly implement a national plan for hepatitis C elimination,” John Ward, MD, director of the Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination, said in a statement. “There is no time to lose. Each year, over 10,000 Americans die from this totally preventable and curable disease. We can now reach the goals of no American dying of hepatitis C.”

According to the senators, the proposal could save an estimated $6.6 billion in taxpayer dollars. The Coalition puts the savings even higher, estimating that the national effort would prevent 24,000 hepatitis C deaths and save $18 billion in health care costs, including $13 billion in savings

for the federal government, over the next 10 years.

“It has been unacceptable that people with hepatitis C have had to overcome so many discriminatory barriers instituted by state Medicaid programs and insurers to access hepatitis C curative drugs over the past 12 years since the first drug was approved,” Carl Schmid, executive director of the HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute said in a statement. “Additionally, our government has failed to invest in the public health infrastructure needed to increase awareness, testing and linkage to care and the curative drugs. This bill, if enacted, will finally provide the necessary resources to ensure that more people are diagnosed and linked to no-cost treatment so that we can eventually eliminate hepatitis C.”

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