

WASHINGTON (August 15) – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) today brought attention to legislation to improve supportive care for patients diagnosed with serious illnesses during a tour of medical facilities at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).

Bachus visited UAB's Comprehensive Cancer Center and received a briefing on UAB's Center for Palliative and Supportive Care, a national leader in the field. Palliative care helps individuals with serious medical conditions manage ongoing pain and symptoms.

Congressman Bachus and Congressman Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO) are the sponsors of the Patient Centered Quality of Life Act, bipartisan legislation to improve awareness and coordination of palliative care. The bill has been endorsed by the American Cancer Society and other health organizations.

“At UAB, we have a model approach on how palliative care can be used to enhance the quality of life for patients and improve coordination in the delivery of health care. We are making ground-breaking advances in the initial treatment of serious illnesses, but we also need to be aware of the pain and side effects that people may have to live with for a very long time. Improving patient care and reducing fragmentation in our health care system is something that should bring us together on a bipartisan basis,” said Congressman Bachus.

The Director of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Care Center, Dr. Edward Partridge, and the Director of the Center for Palliative and Supportive Care, Dr. Rodney Tucker, helped lead the tour of the facilities.

Dr. Tucker said, “Palliative and Supportive Care services are linked very closely with the provision of comprehensive cancer care. As such, these services are becoming a part of the national discussion. There is a need to coordinate health care professionals from many fields to treat the physical, mental and emotional symptoms that come with the disease. Palliative care improves the quality of life during the treatment, as well as the overall outcome of the treatment.”

The Patient Centered Quality of Life Act would enhance the emphasis on palliative care training

and education at federal agencies including the Centers for Disease Control, Department of Health and Human Services, and National Institutes of Health and authorize planning for a national summit on palliative care.

Congressman Bachus and Congressman Cleaver formally introduced the bill in the U.S. House of Representatives on July 19.