

# U.S. Sens. Baldwin, Collins, Morelle, Fitzpatrick: Lead colleagues in introducing legislation to increase access to lifesaving cancer screenings

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and Representatives Joe Morelle (D-NY-25) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-08) led their colleagues in introducing the bipartisan *Screening for Communities to Receive Early and Equitable Needed Services (SCREENS) for Cancer Act* to reauthorize the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP), a lifesaving program that provides breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services for women who are low-income, uninsured, and underinsured who do not qualify for Medicaid. The NBCCEDP, a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state departments of health, has provided breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services to more than six million women, detecting nearly 75,000 breast cancers and almost 4,000 premalignant breast lesions.

The legislation is also sponsored by Senators Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Representative Nanette Barragan (D-CA-44).

“Cancer plagues every corner of the country, but with proper screening and treatment, lives can be saved and families can continue to be whole,” **said Senator Baldwin**. “The NBCCEDP has a proven track record of providing

preventative and diagnostic cancer services nationwide, saving patients and taxpayers money, and most importantly, saving lives. I am proud to introduce this bipartisan legislation to help folks get the cancer screening and treatment they need, and help save lives.”

“Cancer is a devastating disease that has taken a heavy toll on countless families. Cancer prevention and screening programs are vital because the earlier this disease is caught, the better the prognosis,” **said Senator Collins.** “NBCCEDP provides thousands of uninsured and underinsured Mainers with breast and cervical cancer screening, diagnostic, and treatment services each year. Our bipartisan legislation would reauthorize and strengthen this critical program, helping to improve the health of women in Maine and nationwide and ultimately saving lives.”

“Too many families across America know the pain of receiving a cancer diagnosis. Nearly 300,000 people in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer and another 14,000 will be diagnosed with cervical cancer this year,” **said Congressman Joe Morelle.** “My daughter, Lauren, battled breast cancer for two years with incredible courage, sharing her story and underscoring the importance of early detection. I’m proud to carry on her legacy by helping all women access the critical cancer screening services they need, regardless of their income—so fewer families will suffer the unimaginable loss of a loved one. I’m grateful to partner with Senators Baldwin and Collins on this important legislation and look forward to working together to move it forward.”

“Early testing for cancer saves lives and I am proud to sponsor this bipartisan and bicameral legislation,” **said Congressman Fitzpatrick, Co-Chair of the Congressional Cancer Caucus.** “The SCREENS Act will allow for better access to cancer screenings for women across the country. This life-saving legislation is a step in the right direction at putting an end to cancer deaths.”

“Simply put, the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program saves lives in West Virginia, and across the country,” **Senator Capito said.**

“Reauthorizing this program is a key component of the SCREENS for Cancer Act, and I’m proud to help introduce it today. As a longtime advocate in the fight against cancer and as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I’ll continue to ensure this vital program can maintain its role in providing access to critical medical services that help avoid often preventable deaths.”

“Since it was established thirty years ago, the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program has helped millions of women who otherwise would not have gotten care and detected thousands of cancers so they could be treated as early as possible,” **said Senator Cortez Masto**. “These preventative and lifesaving programs are vital for Nevadans, and I’ll keep working to ensure they’re reauthorized.”

“Following my breast cancer diagnosis after a routine screening last year, preventative care is personal to me. While I was fortunate to have caught the cancer at an early stage, that is not the case for many,” **said Senator Klobuchar**. “Too many Americans delayed health screenings over the last three years. By expanding the reach of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, we can help ensure that women who are most vulnerable have access to life-saving breast and cervical cancer screenings.”

The SCREENS for Cancer Act would reauthorize the NBCCEDP through 2027. The program provides public education, outreach, patient navigation, and care coordination to increase breast and cervical cancer screening rates and reach underserved populations. Without access to early detection programs, many people who are uninsured are forced to delay or forgo screenings, which could lead to late-stage breast cancer diagnoses. This delay can mean that a person may not seek care until the cancer has spread beyond the breast, making it up to five times more expensive and harder to treat.

This SCREENS for Cancer Act would also increase flexibility to NBCCEDP grantees, allowing for a greater emphasis on implementing innovative evidence-based interventions and aggressive outreach to underserved communities through media, peer educators, and patient navigators. At current funding levels, NBCCEDP serves only 15 percent of the estimated number of eligible women for breast cancer services. The *SCREENS for Cancer Act* provides additional funding to better support the program and ensure that more women are able to access services.

“Screening is a key step in routine breast care but so many people are currently unable to access it – the SCREENS for Cancer Act can change that,” **said Molly Guthrie, VP of Policy & Advocacy at Susan G. Komen**. “We have to make timely access to high-quality screening and diagnosis available to all, especially those in under-resourced communities where disparities in outcomes are highest, so that cancers can be caught early when there are more treatment options and prognosis is better.”

“Early detection saves lives, and this legislation will truly be a lifesaver for people who may delay or miss cancer screenings because they have little or no health insurance coverage, or the financial means to pay for these services out of pocket,” **said Karen Timberlake, Secretary-designee of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.** “Besides financial concerns, there can be other challenges to accessing and completing these screenings, like transportation or language barriers. DHS is working hard with partners to eliminate those barriers, so everyone has the opportunity to get screened and stay healthy. We are grateful to Senator Baldwin and Senator Collins for recognizing the importance of these screenings with this bill.”

The SCREENS Act is endorsed by Susan G. Komen, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Association of Oncology Social Work, Check for a Lump, Living Beyond Breast Cancer, FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered, Men Supporting Women with Cancer, National Cervical Cancer Coalition, National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, National Comprehensive Cancer Network, National Consortium of Breast Centers, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Women’s Health Network, Prevent Cancer Foundation, Sharsheret, Society for Women’s Health Research, Society for Women’s Health Research and TOUCH, The Black Breast Cancer Alliance.