

Early Detection Saves Lives Coalition: Promotes efforts for increased breast cancer imaging legislation

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[Madison, Wis.] – Today, the Early Detection Saves Lives Coalition is promoting its efforts to increase critical access to life-saving breast cancer imaging in Wisconsin with Senate Bill 121. The bipartisan bill, backed by over one-third of the state Legislature and leading healthcare organizations across Wisconsin, eliminates patient cost-sharing for those with dense breast tissue and those at increased risk of breast cancer. In Wisconsin, nearly 5,500 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year alone, and over 700 will die from the disease.

The coalition's work comes as First Lady Jill Biden visits the state to highlight the importance of early detection and improving access to cancer screenings.

The bill, authored by Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara (R-Appleton) and Rep. Nate Gustafson (R-Neenah), builds on the notification required in 2017 Act 201 that all facilities that perform mammograms must provide notice to patients with dense breast tissue. SB 121 requires health insurance policies to include coverage with no patient cost-sharing for supplemental or diagnostic breast examinations for those at increased risk for breast cancer according to guidelines established by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network and those with dense breasts as defined by the American College of Radiology's Breast Imaging-Reporting and Data System (BI-RADS).

Health insurers in Wisconsin are currently required to provide one annual

mammographic screening to women over 50, and two screenings to women aged 45-49 who meet certain criteria, at no out-of-pocket cost to the patient. Unfortunately, the supplemental or diagnostic breast screenings across the country can range from \$234 to over \$1,000 in out-of-pocket costs, which imposes a major financial barrier to those who need it.

“When a woman gets that notification letter about her density after a mammogram, and has a discussion about it with her doctor, she has a decision to make. Any cost barrier at this point could be the difference between a breast cancer that is detected early, when it’s most treatable, and one that has already spread beyond the breast, when it becomes life threatening, said **Dawn Anderson of the Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition, Wisconsin’s foremost breast cancer advocacy organization.**”

Early, effective detection of breast cancer saves lives and prevents debilitating costs for intensive, long-term treatments. An early cancer diagnosis can reduce treatment costs by 2-4 times compared to a late-stage diagnosis. In states that have enacted similar legislation, insurance costs were estimated to increase minimally, ranging from \$0.04-\$0.07 per member per month – just \$0.84 per year at most.

“Access to preventative screenings is critical to catching breast cancer early and ensuring that women can fight back,” said **Gail Zeamer, a health advocate and breast cancer fighter.** “I discovered I had Stage 3 breast cancer even though I had kept up with receiving mammograms regularly. These screenings would have caught my cancer earlier and probably saved my life.”

Leading organizations that have registered in support of SB 121 include the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists – WI Section, Ascension Wisconsin, BioForward Inc., GE HealthCare, the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, the Medical College of Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Professional Firefighters Association, RAYUS Radiology, Susan G. Komen, the Wisconsin Association of Hematology and Oncology, the Wisconsin Breast Cancer Coalition, the Wisconsin Medical Society, the Wisconsin Nurses Association, and the Wisconsin Radiological Society.

Co-sponsors of SB 121 include: Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara (author), Rep. Nate Gustafson (author), Sen. Tim Carpenter, Sen. Dianne Hesselbein, Sen. Jesse James, Sen. Chris Larson, Sen. Kelda Roys, Sen. Mark Spreitzer, Sen. Lena Taylor, Sen.

Robert Wirch, Rep. Jimmy Anderson, Rep. Deb Andraca, Rep. Samba Baldeh, Rep. Mike Bare, Rep. Elijah Behnke, Rep. Amy Binsfeld, Rep. Marisabel Cabrera, Rep. Sue Conley, Rep. Dave Considine, Rep. Barbara Dittrich, Rep. Bob Donovan, Rep. Joy Goeben, Rep. Rick Gundrum, Rep. Kalan Haywood, Rep. Jenna Jacobson, Rep. Alex Joers, Rep. Scott Krug, Rep. John Macco, Rep. Darrin Madison, Rep. Supreme Moore Omokunde, Rep. David Murphy, Rep. Jeffrey Mursau, Rep. Tod Ohnstad, Rep. Sylvia Ortiz-Velez, Rep. Lori Palmeri, Rep. Melissa Ratcliff, Rep. Donna Rozar, Rep. Christine Sinicki, Rep. Lee Snodgrass, Rep. John Spiros, Rep. Lisa Subeck, Rep. Ron Tusler, and Rep. Robyn Vining.

The Early Detection Saves Lives Coalition is dedicated to increasing critical access to essential breast cancer imaging in Wisconsin. Visit EarlyDetectionWI.com to learn more.