

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Bill to increase access to lifesaving cancer screenings advances in Senate

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Susan Collins (R-ME) advanced bipartisan legislation in the Senate this week to expand access to lifesaving cancer screenings. The *Screening for Communities to Receive Early and Equitable Needed Services (SCREENS) for Cancer Act* reauthorizes a lifesaving program that provides breast and cervical cancer screenings and diagnostic services for women who are low-income, uninsured, or underinsured and who do not qualify for Medicaid. On Tuesday, the bill passed out of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) with unanimous support, teeing it up for a full vote in the Senate.

Senators Baldwin and Collins [introduced](#) the *SCREENS for Cancer Act* earlier this year to reauthorize the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP), which since 1991 has served more than 6.1 million women, detecting nearly 77,000 breast cancers and over 24,000 premalignant breast lesions.

“Preventative screenings can be the difference between life and death for Americans battling cancer. The NBCCEDP provides these lifesaving screenings to millions of women who would otherwise not have access to this critical care,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “I’m proud to have worked with Republicans and Democrats to advance our bill so we can help ensure no American is locked out of lifesaving cancer screenings because of cost.”

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Wisconsin, accounting for nearly one-third of all cancer diagnosed among women. According to the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from 2017 to 2021, the NBCCEDP has helped at least 10,000 women in Wisconsin receive a total of 9,908 preventative breast screening tests, and 3,564 cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services. This preventative screening helped detect 204 breast cancers and 110 cervical cancers or pre-cancerous cervical lesions.

The *SCREENS for Cancer Act* would reauthorize NBCCEDP through 2028. The program, which is a partnership between the CDC and state health departments, provides public education, outreach, patient navigation and care coordination to increase breast and cervical cancer screening rates and reach underserved, vulnerable populations. Without access to early detection programs, many people who are uninsured are forced to delay or forgo screenings, which can lead to late-stage cancer diagnoses. This delay can mean that a person may not seek care until the cancer has spread, making it more dangerous, more expensive, and harder to treat.

The bill 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 fewer than 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.