

February 25, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

Our organizations are diverse in our goals and approach, but we are unified in our mission to prevent breast cancer deaths by educating women about their breast cancer risks and ensuring they have access to screening for breast cancer. We write to urge your support for two bills which will reauthorize legislation to advance this mission for women age 49 and younger: the PALS Act and the EARLY Act.

While the majority of women develop breast cancer later in life, young women do develop this potentially life-threatening disease, which is often diagnosed in more aggressive forms that progress rapidly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that eleven percent of all new diagnoses of breast cancer are in women younger than 45. The need for earlier screening and diagnosis is higher for women with inherited mutations associated with increased risk of cancer such as the BRCA genes, Ashkenazi Jewish and Black women, and women who were treated with radiation therapy for cancer as a child or young adult. We seek your support for a bill that would increase the CDC funding for education and awareness among women 45 and younger, and a bill that would continue to protect their access to screening mammography.

The **PALS (Protecting Access to Lifesaving Screening) Act, H.R. 2777**, extends legislation originally passed in 2015 to protect access to mammography screening coverage with no co-pay for women ages 40-49. Introduced by Representatives Debbie Wasserman Schultz (the original PALS Act author) and Susan Brooks, the PALS Act would reauthorize the original legislation through 2025 and clarifies that the policy is intended to include all digital screening mammography. The current moratorium expires on January 1, 2022 and does not reflect the fact that digital is the current standard of practice. Without this bill, not all women will have access to digital screening mammograms with no co-pay.

The PALS Act is necessary for women 40-49, because it places a moratorium on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendation, which currently would give a C rating to annual screening mammograms for women ages 40-49 – only an A or B rating ensures mammogram screening coverage with no co-pay. The PALS Act moratorium has allowed concerns from the medical and advocacy communities to be addressed, reflects guidelines released by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that conflict with those of the USPSTF, and ensures continued access (with no co-pay) to potentially lifesaving breast screening for women starting at age 40.

We know that breast screening saves lives and the PALS Act has made a difference. A study last year by researchers from the University of Colorado, Duke University and the University of Michigan concluded that mammograms have helped save up to 600,000 lives since 1989. This

study reported that in 2018 alone, up to 46,000 lives were saved.^{1,2} The National Cancer Institute estimates that 10 percent of new cases of breast cancer this year will be in women under the age of 45. **Due to the PALS Act, approximately 22 million women between the ages of 40-49 are guaranteed access to mammography with insurance coverage with no co-pay.**³

The **EARLY (Breast Cancer Education and Awareness Requires Learning Young) Act, H.R. 4078**, would reauthorize and increase funding which was originally authorized in 2010. The EARLY Act gives needed attention to the education of younger (age 45 and younger) and higher risk women about their breast health. The program not only educates younger women on breast cancer risks, but it supports initiatives and research to help identify high-risk women, collect family histories and educate doctors, nurses and other critical healthcare providers. The need for this bill is clearly outlined by the CDC which states, “All women are at risk for getting breast cancer, but some things can raise a woman’s risk for getting breast cancer before age 45. Learning what factors increase your chance of getting breast cancer is an important first step in assessing your risk.” The EARLY Act is also sponsored by Representatives Wasserman Schultz and Brooks.

We know that early education, awareness, and breast screening can save lives. We seek your support to advance these bills through Congress as soon as possible. **Let’s make 2020 an important year for helping to save lives by early diagnosis of breast cancer.**

Sincerely,

American College of Radiology
American Women Unite for Breast Cancer Screening
Black Women’s Health Imperative
Breast Friends
Bright Pink
DenseBreast-info, Inc.
Don’t be a Chump! Check for a Lump!
FORCE (Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered)
Living Beyond Breast Cancer
Men Supporting Women With Cancer
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health
National Black Nurses Association
National Consortium of Breast Centers
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Medical Association
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Servicewomen’s Network
Sharsheret
Society of Breast Imaging
Susan G. Komen
Tigerlily Foundation

CC: Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Representative Susan Brooks

Sources:

¹Hendrick, R. Edward & A. Baker, Jay & A. Helvie, Mark. (2019). Breast cancer deaths averted over 3 decades. Cancer. 10.1002/cncr.31954.

²US News and World Report, Feb 11, 2019. www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2019-02-11/mammograms-helped-save-up-to-600-000-us-lives-since-1989-study (accessed March 14, 2019)

³US Census National Population by Characteristics: 2010-2017. www.census.gov/data/datasets/2017/demo/pepst/nation-detail.html (accessed March 14, 2019)