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Senate of Pennsylvania

SEP 16 2011

MEMO

DATE: September 16, 2011
TO: All Members
FROM: Senator Bob Mensch *RB*
SUBJECT: Co-Sponsorship #9 - Breast Density Screening Notification and Screening Insurance Coverage

I am introducing two pieces of legislation to address breast density in breast cancer screening.

Dense breast complicate early detection of breast cancer. Women who have extremely dense breast tissue are at a 4 to 6x greater risk of developing breast cancer.

Mammogram films of breasts with higher density are harder to read and interpret than those of less dense breasts. Breast density is one of the strongest predictors of the failure of mammography screening to detect cancer, with a mammogram missing at least 40% of tumors in women with the densest breasts. Both cancer and density appear white on a mammogram so detecting tumors is much more difficult in denser breasts without further screening provided by an ultrasound or an MRI.

While about 40 percent of women who get mammograms have dense breast, almost 95% of women are unaware of their own breast density according to a recent poll. There is no established protocol of informing women about breast density even if their density is high and most are unaware of their breast density even after a mammogram. Younger women are more at risk since about 50 percent of woman under 50 have dense breast.

The first bill I will introduce will require certified FDA facilities to provide patients with information regarding their breast density, along with a notice to read:

"If your mammogram demonstrates that you have dense breast tissue, which could hide abnormalities, and you have other risk factors for breast cancer that have been identified, you might benefit from supplemental screening tests that may be suggested by your ordering physician.

Dense breast tissue, in and of itself, is a relatively common condition. Therefore, this information is not provided to cause undue concern, but rather to raise your awareness and to promote discussion with your physician regarding the presence of other risk factors, in addition to dense breast tissue.

A report of your mammography results will be sent to you and your physician. You should contact your physician if you have any questions or concerns regarding this report."

The second bill is an amendment to the Insurance Company Law of 1921 and will extend mandated insurance coverage to ultrasound screening and magnetic resonance imaging if a mammogram demonstrates heterogeneous or dense breast tissue based on the Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System established by the American College of Radiology or if a woman is believed to be at increased risk for breast cancer due to family history or prior personal history of breast cancer, positive genetic testing or other indications as deemed medically necessary by the woman's physician.

The Pennsylvania Breast Cancer Coalition supports both these initiatives. If you would like to join me in sponsoring either bill, please call my office at 787-3110 or email Geri Sarfert at gsarfert@pasen.gov by **September 30, 2011.**