



February 15, 2013

Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Health Care and Human Services Committee
900 Court ST, NW
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 420 – Dense Breast Tissue Notification & Insurance Coverage

Dear Senator Anderson and members of the Health Care & Human Services Committee:

On Behalf of the Board of Directors of Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc., which represents the 45,000 women each year in the United States with “normal” mammography reports yet have **hidden invasive cancer** because of their dense breast tissue, I write to voice our **support of SB 420 and ask that this correspondence be included in the record.**

In 2004, I was diagnosed with advanced **stage 3C breast cancer after a decade of ‘normal’ mammograms.** I learned about my dense breast tissue risk after my cancer diagnosis, which was within weeks of my “happy gram” report, which stated that the results of my mammogram were “normal.” My surgeon informed me that my **years of mammography screening failed to detect my cancer because of my dense breast tissue.**

I was shocked to find out that my story, while compelling, is common as 40% of women have dense breast tissue. **Breast density is the strongest predictor of the failure of mammography screening to detect cancer.** However, **less than one in 10 women learn about their breast density** from their physician. For more than two decades, research demonstrates that women with dense breast tissue **have about a 50% chance of having their cancer detected** by mammography alone. As density increases, the sensitivity of a mammogram to “see” cancer decreases. **Dense Breast Tissue is also a well-established predictor of breast cancer risk** – its relative risk is greater than a woman having TWO first-degree relatives with breast cancer.

Armed with these startling facts, I started working with the CT legislature and in 2009, Connecticut became the **first state in the nation to standardize the communication of breast density** to women through their mammography report. The state of **Texas passed similar legislation in 2011; followed by Virginia, New York and California in 2012.** Presently, ten states, **including Oregon,** are introducing notification bills in 2013. The state of Oregon is emerging as one of the leaders in the nation with its support of ultrasound coverage as a screening supplement for women with dense breast tissue.

We commend the leadership of Senators Dingfelder and Steiner-Hayward for bringing **this critical health issue** to the committee. Women of Oregon with dense breast tissue are one of Oregon’s most vulnerable citizens and need protection from advanced stage breast cancer. **SB 420** will give women of Oregon information about their dense breast tissue **so they can be informed participants** in discussions with their health care providers about their personalized breast screening program. **SB 420 will lead to a reduction in later stage cancers, less aggressive treatments and better life outcomes** for Oregon women.

Sincerely,
Nancy M Cappello

Nancy M. Cappello, Ph.D.
President and Founder
Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc.