

Breast Density Awareness - Saving lives through education and improving early detection: SB 420

Senator Dingfelder, Senator Steiner Hayward, Representative Tomei

Summary: SB 420 requires a health care facility or radiologist who performs a mammogram noting dense breast tissue to issue a notice to the patient educating them about dense breast tissue and risks associated with dense breast tissue. In addition, it requires that the notice state that the patient might benefit from supplementary screening and recommends that the patient contact their health care provider to discuss this further. It also requires health insurance companies to cover ultrasound for women with dense breast tissue as a screening procedure, which cannot be subject to cost-sharing.

Background: Oregon law ensures that all women over the age of 40 with health insurance receive full coverage for annual and other medically necessary mammograms, but mammograms typically miss 40% or more of tumors in women with dense breasts. A large percentage of women do not know their breast density and there is currently no requirement that women get notification if their mammogram shows dense breasts. A number of other states, including Connecticut, California, Texas, Virginia and New York have enacted Breast Density Notification legislation. Adding supplemental screening modalities to mammography, such as ultrasound, for women with dense breasts can increase cancer detection. However, ultrasound is not currently covered by insurance companies as screening and is therefore subject to cost-sharing.

Fact: Breast density is one of the strongest predictors of the failure of mammography to detect cancer.

Fact: Mammograms typically miss 40% or more of tumors in women with dense breasts.

Fact: 95% of women over 40 do not know their breast density and less than 1 in 10 find out from their doctor.

Fact: 90% of women do not know density increases the risk of developing breast cancer.

Fact: Raising awareness of breast density will increase detection of early state cancer – when it is most treatable and survivable.

For questions or comments, contact:

Andee Short, 503-986-1723

sen.jackiedingfelder@state.or.us