

**JACKIE DINGFELDER**  
**STATE SENATOR**  
DISTRICT 23



OREGON STATE SENATE  
900 Court St. NE, S-407  
Salem, OR 97301

To: Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee  
From: State Senator Jackie Dingfelder  
Date: February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**Re: Testimony in support of SB 420**

Chair Monnes-Anderson and members of the Committee, thank you for hearing SB 420 and for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of this bill. According to the Center for Disease Control, breast cancer is a leading cause of cancer related deaths among women, killing over 40,000 women in the US in 2009. The good news is that with the use of mammography we are able to catch cancer earlier and when it is more treatable. However, mammography is less effective at catching cancer in women with dense breast tissue.

Dense breast tissue is comprised of less fatty tissue, and more glandular tissue. What this means for purposes of mammograms is that dense breast tissue appears as white; the same color as tumors, making it very difficult to see early stage cancers. In fact, mammograms typically miss 40% or more of tumors in women with dense breasts. In addition to masking cancers, dense breast tissue is an independent risk factor, and can be a greater risk factor than having two first degree relatives with breast cancer. Yet very few women know the risks associated with dense breast tissue, let alone their own breast density.

SB 420 seeks to raise awareness and educate woman about dense breast tissue. SB 420 would require 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 the risks associated with dense breast tissue. This will allow women to better understand the risk they face of getting breast cancer, and to understand the limits of mammography. It will also prevent more stories like Ms. Caldwell's from happening. The committee will hear from Ms. Caldwell shortly, about how she thought she was doing everything she could to screen for breast cancer, yet still the doctor missed her cancer for 2 years.

Both state and federal standards require compressive coverage of mammograms, to ensure women have access to affordable breast cancer screening. However, for the 40% of women who have dense breast tissue, mammography is less effective. While mammography is the most widely available screening test for breast cancer today, and while it does save lives, it is important to recognize that mammography has major limitations especially for women with dense breast tissue.

In addition to ensuring women understand their breast density, SB 420 will also require insurance coverage of breast ultrasounds if a woman has had a mammogram and a doctor determines she has dense breast tissue and recommends another screening procedure. If mammography is to be used as a base level screening procedure, and therefore a fully covered procedure, we must consider the fact that mammography does not always work for a significant part of the population. We therefore must make screening alternatives available by ensuring their affordability.

I urge your support of SB 420 as it will save lives by educating women about the risks of dense breast tissue, make them aware of alternatives to mammography, and require women with dense breast tissue have access to affordable screening alternatives. By passing SB 420 we will increase early detection of breast cancer and improve survival rates, ultimately saving lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Dingfelder". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Senator Jackie Dingfelder  
Senate District 23