



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate boosts awareness and early detection of breast cancer

SB 420A requires health care providers to notify patient of mammogram results that show dense breast tissue

SALEM—This morning the Senate approved a bill that will promote the early detection of breast cancer by requiring doctors to notify patients of dense breast tissue indicated by a mammogram. SB 420A, which passed on a unanimous vote, will allow for earlier detection of breast cancer while raising awareness and educating women about the risks that can lead to breast cancer.

“SB 420A will save lives by educating women about the risks of dense breast tissue by making them aware of alternatives to and limits of mammography,” said Sen. Jackie Dingfelder (D-Portland), chief sponsor of the bill. “By passing SB 420A we will increase early detection of breast cancer, improve survival rates, and ultimately save lives.”

Breast density is a scientific measure that compares the area of the breast and connective tissue to the area of fat. High breast density means there is a greater ratio of breast and connective tissue, which can indicate a likelihood of breast cancer. However, mammography is considered less effective at detecting cancer in women with dense breast tissue. On mammograms, the dense tissue appears white, the same color as tumors, which may obscure early stage cancers.

SB 420A would require a health care facility that performs a mammogram noting dense breast tissue to notify the patient about their breast density. This notification will also include information about the risks associated with dense breast tissue and alternative screening modalities, such as ultrasound, that may provide for better detection of breast cancer.

“Dense breast tissue can obscure the diagnosis of breast cancer, and it is a risk factor of breast cancer itself. This bill takes a huge step forward for addressing early detection and improving survival rates for Oregon women,” said Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward (D-Beaverton), a family physician and co-chair of the Oregon Women’s Health and Wellness Alliance. “Notification will empower women to talk to their provider all screening options.”

If SB 420A becomes law, Oregon would be among the first set of states to enact a notification law for dense breast tissue. In 2009, Connecticut passed the first law requiring notification of dense breast tissue, and Texas, Virginia, New York and California have subsequently passed similar laws.

“As a breast cancer survivor, I know the tremendous impact that this disease can have on a woman and her family,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Women should know if they are at increased risk for breast cancer due to dense tissue. SB 420A will increase awareness that dense breast tissue is a critical health issue, and it will hopefully lead to earlier treatment in cases of breast cancer.”

SB 420A will now go to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

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