



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

Senator Flanagan Announces Passage Of Breast Cancer Legislation

JOHN J. FLANAGAN June 22, 2011

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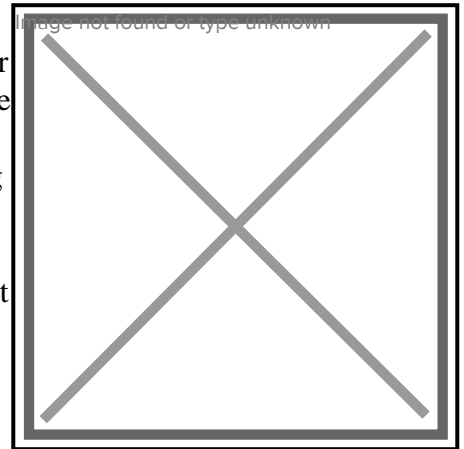
Senator John J. Flanagan (2nd Senate District) announced that legislation he sponsored to provide stronger preventative health care for women has passed the New York Senate. The legislation would require insurance companies to cover the cost of supplemental screening for women who have dense breast tissue or who are at greater risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer.

The legislation would also require that every report a radiologist issues to a patient following a mammogram include information on breast density and information on the availability and usefulness of further screenings. This information will empower women to be more informed about their own medical situation so that they are better equipped to speak with their physicians and make decisions about their own health care.

According to leading medical studies, breast cancer is five times more likely in the 40% of women who have dense breast tissue but mammograms alone miss up to 40% of tumors that are present in women with dense breast tissue. Dr. Oz, Daytime Emmy Award-winning host of "The Dr. Oz Show," and Vice-Chair and Professor of Surgery at Columbia University, recently cited "dense breast tissue" as one of the top 5 cancer risks for women over 40.

"We believe that it should be regular practice for doctors to inform women if their mammogram shows they have dense breasts, and to educate them about what it means for their breast cancer risk," stated Jackie Pritchard, Executive Director of the Western New York Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, speaking also on behalf of Komen's Central New York, Greater New York City, and Northeastern New York Affiliates. "But, knowledge is only power if you can do something about it. That's why it's important that doctors discuss with their patients with dense breasts what additional screening tools might be appropriate for them."

A recent Harris Interactive survey found that 95% of women do not know their breast density even though it is a risk factor and only one in 10 women find out about breast density from their physician.



Senator Flanagan started working on this legislation after being approached by Ms. JoAnn Pushkin of Dix Hills, a breast cancer survivor turned advocate and co-founder of D.E.N.S.E. (Density Education National Survivors' Effort). Ms. Pushkin's cancer was diagnosed later than necessary as her annual mammograms were unable to detect a tumor through dense breast tissue. Ms. Pushkin worked closely with Senator Flanagan's office to write the legislation and continues to work with him to make sure that the measure becomes law in New York State.

The Senate-approved bill has been sent to the Assembly for further action.

"Every woman throughout our state deserves to have the knowledge and the tools to protect themselves from breast cancer and I applaud JoAnn for being such a tireless advocate for this legislation. Breast cancer is an insidious disease that impacts far too many of our residents and we have an obligation to take whatever steps necessary to fight it," stated Senator Flanagan. "This legislation will protect women throughout our state and it is my hope that the Assembly joins the Senate in making this a reality in New York State."

"Early detection of breast cancer can mean the difference between life and death, so it is crucial that all women receive effective and accurate screening," Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos said. "This bill ensures coverage of supplemental screening tools for women with dense breast tissue so that doctors and patients can have the information necessary to help save lives."

"I had a tumor that went undetected year after year on a mammogram and it was missed because my breast density drastically interfered with the effectiveness of a mammogram," Ms. Pushkin said. "I was never told about my own density, never told it interfered with a mammography and never referred on for further screening. When women aren't informed about their own breast density, and its inherent risk, we are denied the opportunity and choice to protect and advocate for ourselves. I am profoundly grateful to Senator Flanagan for embracing the concept of this legislation and fully supporting it with the efforts of his office."

By requiring insurance companies to cover supplemental screening tools and doctors to notify their patients of increased risks associated with dense breast tissue, it is believed that this will lead to earlier detection and greater survival rates.

"There will be an untold number of women who will not have to face the horror of a late stage cancer diagnosis if this bill becomes law," Ms. Pushkin said. "The very first sentence of this legislative journey, which will prove life saving for so many NY women, will begin with, 'Senator Flanagan listened.'"

IMPORTANT LINKS

[Link to Senator Flanagan's Legislation](#)

[ARE YOU DENSE web site](#)

Fact Sheet from ARE YOU DENSE

ARE YOU DENSE ADVOCACY web site (Legislative Info)

ARE YOU DENSE Facebook page

SUSAN G. KOMEN FOR THE CURE web site

SUSAN G. KOMEN FOR THE CURE ADVOCACY ALLIANCE web site

NEW YORK BREAST CANCER SUPPORT & EDUCATION NETWORK