NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kenneth P. LaValle

Senator LaValle Announces New Law to Help Increase Early Detection of Breast Cancer

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New York State Senator Kenneth P. LaValle today announced that legislation he supported to improve early breast cancer detection was recently signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo. The new law (S6769B) will increase women’s awareness of the presence of dense breast tissue found during a mammography exam. Dense breast tissue may make it more difficult to detect tumors.

“This new law will help save women’s lives by increasing awareness of a known breast cancer risk factor. Along with routine breast cancer screenings, the information provided by physicians to those with dense breast tissue can help increase early detection of the disease and give patients a greater ability to make

educated decisions about their health," Senator LaValle said.

The law was passed by the Senate in June and requires educational information to be provided to women with dense breast tissue. Patients will receive a mammography report in plain, non-technical language about a finding of dense breast tissue and will also be given information about how they should discuss the potential benefit of further screenings with their physician.

Mammogram films of breasts with higher density are harder to read and interpret than those of less dense breasts. Approximately 40 to 50 percent of tumors in dense tissue may not be detected since this condition obscures their presence. According to leading medical studies, breast cancer is four to six times more likely in women with dense breast tissue.

In spite of the risk factor presented by dense breast tissue, a recent Harris Interactive survey found that 95 percent of women do not know their breast density, and less than one-in-ten women learn about breast density from their physician. Prior to this new law, there were no legal requirements for patients in New York to be alerted to breast density.