

February 25, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
U. S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Ranking Member Leahy:

Our organizations are diverse in our goals and approach, but we are unified in our mission to prevent breast cancer deaths by ensuring women and men have access to screening for breast cancer. We write to urge your support for a bill which will reauthorize legislation to advance this mission for women age 40-49: the PALS (Protecting Access to Lifesaving Screening) Act.

While the majority of women develop breast cancer later in life, young women do develop this potentially life-threatening disease, which is often diagnosed in more aggressive forms that progress rapidly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that eleven percent of all new diagnoses of breast cancer are in women younger than 45. The need for earlier screening and diagnosis is higher for women with inherited mutations associated with increased risk of cancer such as the BRCA genes, Ashkenazi Jewish and Black women, and women who were treated with radiation therapy for cancer as a child or young adult. We seek your support for a bill that would continue to protect their access to screening mammography.

The **PALS (Protecting Access to Lifesaving Screening) Act, S. 1936**, extends legislation originally passed in 2015 to protect access to mammography screening coverage with no co-pay for women ages 40-49. Introduced by Senators Marsha Blackburn, Dianne Feinstein, Shelley Moore Capito, and Jeanne Shaheen, the PALS Act would reauthorize the original legislation through 2025 and clarifies that the policy is intended to include all digital screening mammography. The current moratorium expires on January 1, 2022 and does not reflect the fact that digital is the current standard of practice. Without this bill, not all women will have access to digital screening mammograms with no co-pay. The House companion is H.R. 2777, sponsored by Representatives Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Susan Brooks. We note that Senator Blackburn was an original sponsor of the 2015 legislation in the House.

The PALS Act protects women's access to mammograms by placing a moratorium on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendation, which currently would give a C rating to annual mammograms for women ages 40-49. The PALS Act moratorium has allowed concerns from the medical and advocacy communities to be addressed, reflects guidelines released by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that conflict with those of the USPSTF, and ensures continued access (with no co-pay) to potentially lifesaving breast screening for women starting at age 40.

We know that breast screening saves lives and the PALS Act has made a difference. A study last year by researchers from the University of Colorado, Duke University and the University of Michigan concluded that mammograms have helped save up to 600,000 lives since 1989. This

study reported that in 2018 alone, up to 46,000 lives were saved.<sup>1,2</sup> The National Cancer Institute estimates that 10 percent of new cases of breast cancer this year will be in women under the age of 45. **Due to the PALS Act, approximately 22 million women between the ages of 40-49 are guaranteed access to mammography with insurance coverage with no co-pay.**<sup>3</sup>

The PALS Act makes a difference and *we seek your support to continue the fight for younger women's access to mammograms by extending the Act through 2025.*

Sincerely,

American College of Radiology  
American Women Unite for Breast Cancer Screening  
Black Women's Health Imperative  
Breast Friends  
Bright Pink  
DenseBreast-info, Inc.  
Don't be a Chump! Check for a Lump!  
FORCE (Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered)  
Living Beyond Breast Cancer  
Men Supporting Women With Cancer  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Black Nurses Association  
National Consortium of Breast Centers  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Medical Association  
Prevent Cancer Foundation  
Servicewomen's Network  
Sharsheret  
Society of Breast Imaging  
Susan G. Komen  
Tigerlily Foundation

CC: Senators Marsha Blackburn, Dianne Feinstein, Shelly Moore Capito, and Jeanne Shaheen

Sources:

<sup>1</sup>Hendrick, R. Edward & A. Baker, Jay & A. Helvie, Mark. (2019). Breast cancer deaths averted over 3 decades. *Cancer*. 10.1002/cncr.31954.

<sup>2</sup>US News and World Report, Feb 11, 2019. [www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2019-02-11/mammograms-helped-save-up-to-600-000-us-lives-since-1989-study](http://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2019-02-11/mammograms-helped-save-up-to-600-000-us-lives-since-1989-study) (accessed March 14, 2019)

<sup>3</sup>US Census National Population by Characteristics: 2010-2017. [www.census.gov/data/datasets/2017/demo/pepstat/nation-detail.html](http://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2017/demo/pepstat/nation-detail.html) (accessed March 14, 2019)