



THE WITNESS PROJECT OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

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I am Marilyn Moore, the Executive Director and founder of the Witness Project of Connecticut. I am also the Legislative Aide to Senator Ed Gomes. I am here to support **HB 7162 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR A MOBILE MAMMOGRAPHY PROGRAM.**

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women. Over the course of a woman's life, she has a 1 in 8 chance of getting the disease. It is also possible for men to develop breast cancer, although this is rare.

Cancer is a disease that has or will, touch virtually everyone's life at one time or another. According to ACS in 2007, 2,510 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in CT and 490 women will die. While more white women will be diagnosed, more black women will die. Like many chronic diseases, cancer affects blacks and poor disproportionately than whites. The disparity for black women is partially attributed to later stage diagnosis and lack of access to early detection screening and prompt treatment.

The Witness Project of Connecticut is a national breast and cervical cancer education program designed specifically to address breast cancer education among African American women. Developed by University of Arkansas Medical Research Center by Medical Anthropologist, Deborah O. Erwin in 1995, it was established in CT in 1996 as a method to increase mammography screening among African American women in two urban cities; Bridgeport and Meriden Connecticut.

I have been involved with the program since 1996 and grew the program from an education vehicle into a strong advocacy and screening referral organization that has assisted over 1,500 women get a mammogram in Fairfield County, expanded the education model and implemented a Patient Navigator and Community Champion component to support and ensure women to participate in the early detection screening. In 2003, we launched the Navigator Program in Bridgeport to assist uninsured women navigate the health care systems that had often alienated them. Through these initiatives we identified, documented and addressed the barriers to screening that uninsured women faced in Fairfield County. We learned that the Connecticut Breast Cancer Early Detection Program who offers free mammograms and treatment for uninsured women diagnosed with breast cancer was overburdened and could not handle screening referrals into the programs at Norwalk Hospital and in Stamford the BCC program was non-existent. Through creative collaboration and tenacity, God's grace and dedication, we opened doors for uninsured women that had been shut. Working collaboratively with Stamford Hospital, community health centers and Planned Parenthood we navigated over 700

uninsured women to mammography screenings in Fairfield County. This was accomplished by first providing culturally competent education and then coordinating mammography screenings in their own communities. We have sponsored over 100 mammography screenings since 2002 and reached over 1500 women. We could not have done this without the assistance of Stamford Medical Mobile's portable mammography unit.

Since 2002, we have worked with Stamford Medical Mobile and even contracted with them for three years to conduct education and coordinate mammography screenings in Stamford in the black community. During our three years we reached over 500 women in Stamford and received praise from Mayor Dan Malloy and the American Cancer Society for our ability to reach women in public housing, a community neglected and forgotten by many health providers.

The Connecticut Cancer Partnership, funded by the State of Connecticut, identified that the continuum of cancer care including early detection and treatment needs to be strengthened.

We pride ourselves on our ability to open doors and break down barriers in communities where low-income, forgotten women reside and frequent. We want to continue to make a visible difference in the fight against breast cancer and early detection in Fairfield County.

As the Executive Director and one who has personally "witnessed" the difference we can make in navigating the women through the health care systems, **we support funding for the mobile mammography project.**