

Elizabeth K Cowper

Community Health Center

Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program Coordinator

TESTIMONY- BILL 1097

Madam Chair (or Mr. Chairman), and Members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Elizabeth Cowper. I am the coordinator of the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection program, and the Wise Woman program, for Middlesex County. As you may know, the Community Health Center, which has offices in Middletown and in Clinton in Middlesex County, has been responsible for running this program in Middlesex County.

I am here to support bill 1097 an act expanding the eligibility under the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Treatment Referral Program. I am hear tell you that I believe the Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program is the single most important strategy we have, to make sure that women don't suffer more and die earlier, from cervical cancer and breast cancer just because they cannot afford health insurance. All of us understand the value of getting women to get these tests on the recommended schedule. We may not prevent these diseases, yet, but we can and must make sure they are detected at the earliest time possible, when treatment is likely to be successful.

Community Health Center, Inc. has run the Early Detection Program for Middlesex County for seven years. Our program is unique. From its inception, we wanted to make this everyone's health care project, not just the Health Center's. We therefore enrolled virtually every family physician, obgyn, internists, Planned Parenthood, as well as the medical staff of the Community Health Center, as providers in the Early Detection Program. There is no wrong door in Middlesex County for uninsured women who needs a mammogram and pap smear services, or for follow up of abnormal results.

From 2003 to 2006, 1,709 of unduplicated women were seen by the providers in Middlesex County. There were 859 women who had mammograms. Also, under the Early Detection program 1,571 women had Pap smear services from 2003 to 2006. In addition, in the previous two fiscal years the Community Health Center's Early Detection Program screened approximately 70 women over the 200%FPL.

I would like to thank all the providers who have served this program for these past years, not just the primary care givers but also those who readily responded to our need for further specialist services: the radiologists, the surgeons, the gynecologists. This has been a true partnership, and one that so many women have come to depend on. Please help us to be able continue this standard. If we are truly to eliminate health disparities, not just between racial and ethnic groups, but between the haves and the have nots, those with insurance and those without it, then we need to make sure that this program is adequately serving the un-served and underserved populations, the population that is at or below 250% of the federal poverty line. Bill 1097 will enable CHC's Breast and Cervical Early detection program to serve women who are "falling through the cracks" of the EDP program, under or uninsured women, with incomes too high to qualify for EDP under its current guidelines (200% of FPL) but too low to enable them to pay for services out of pocket.