



**Human Services Committee
March 11, 2008
American Cancer Society Testimony**

**HB 59-13 –An Act Appropriating Funds for
Cancer Prevention and Treatment**

My name is Sarah Shafir and I am The Vice President of Cancer Control for the American Cancer Society, New England Division. I also serve as the co-chair of the early detection committee of the Connecticut Cancer Partnership. I am here to testify on behalf of the over six thousand American Cancer Society volunteers in the state of Connecticut, in support of **House Bill 5913 - An Act Appropriating Funds for Cancer Prevention and Treatment.**

Cancer is a major public health problem in Connecticut and the United States, and is our nation's second leading cause of death, killing more people every year than every war in the 20th century combined. About 20,000 Connecticut residents are expected to develop cancer in 2008 and more than 7,000 Connecticut residents will die this year from cancer. However, cancer is also the most preventable and curable among our nation's chronic diseases. In fact, in recent years, the cancer mortality rate has actually fallen a bit—due in large part to early detection.

Early detection saves lives by allowing for the identification of precancerous tissue so that it can be removed before becoming cancerous. One of the most important tools in our early detection arsenal is the Connecticut Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.

Created in 1995, the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program is a comprehensive screening program available throughout Connecticut for medically underserved women. The primary objective of the program is to significantly increase the number of women who receive breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services, leading to early detection and increases in treatment options.

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women in Connecticut and the US. Since 1990, death rates from breast cancer have declined by an average of 2.4% per year. These decreases are due to earlier detection through screening, increased awareness and improved treatment. We can be proud of the strides we have made in detecting breast cancers early. But we can and should do more.

Currently, the CBCCEDP has 18 Health Care Provider Sites throughout Connecticut. We would urge the committee that program funding be increased to add 5 new providers to expand delivery of breast and cervical cancer screening services to the estimated eligible women throughout the state.

There is additional work to be done as well. For example, we need to fully understand the issues and needs of underserved populations in our state and then we need to work together to develop a plan to address their needs to assure they have equal access to early detection screenings.

Connecticut has the oldest tumor registry in the United States, the first hospice, and New Haven is the home of the discovery of chemotherapy. We should be leaders in promoting access to cancer detection for all our residents. I urge you to support an increase in funding for CBCCEDP. **Vote YES on HB 5913 and give the cancer patients of today and those of tomorrow a fighting chance!**

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