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458

January 31, 2009

Senator Crisco, Representative Fontana, and Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee,

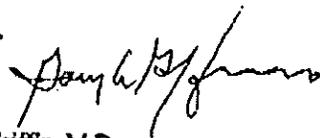
Thank you for the opportunity to voice my support of Raised Bill 458, an Act Requiring Communication of Mammographic Breast Density Information to Patients.

As I had testified last year, through The Charlotte Hungerford Hospital Department of Mammography, our screening breast ultrasound program has been well received by both patients and physicians in our area. Since being instituted in 2005, we have continued to discover multiple breast cancers each year which were invisible on mammography. These discoveries, at an earlier time and less advanced stage, will lead to improved outcomes. While there was not enough time to contact all the women diagnosed with breast cancer and have them compose their own letters, I have no doubt that they would have expressed their gratitude about being able to make an informed decision which has increased their chances of survival.

The key to the success of our program has been that patients have been personally made aware of their high degree of mammographic breast density through the letters sent to them by our department. We have not left this information solely in the hands of their referring physicians, who may or may not pass this on to them or fully understand its implications. Through written materials provided in our waiting rooms and sent to our referring physician offices, as well as personal phone conversations with these patients, they have been able to understand that high breast density in and of itself signifies up to a fivefold increased risk for breast cancer and that screening ultrasound can increase breast cancer detection over mammography alone by as much as thirty percent. They are then free to make their own decision as to whether they wish to proceed with further testing or not.

I would like to also express the importance of having screening mammography fully covered by all insurance carriers as preventive care, regardless of the woman's deductible level. Particularly in our current economic climate, women may choose to forego their annual mammogram if it is required to be included in their deductible and is perceived by them as a benefit that they must pay out of pocket. If the mammogram is never performed, we have lost an opportunity at prevention and screening breast ultrasound becomes a moot point. In other words, it is essential that mammography be fully paid for by the insurance company, regardless of whether that woman's deductible has been met.

Sincerely,



Gary K. Griffin, M.D.
Director, Breast Imaging Services
The Charlotte Hungerford Hospital

President, Torrington Radiologists, P.C.

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