

Statement of the  
Radiological Society of Connecticut  
in support of  
Senate Bill 259  
Insurance and Real Estate Committee  
March 4, 2010

259

Sen. Crisco, Rep. Fontana and members of the committee:

My name is Dr. David Gruen and I am a medical doctor. As a radiologist, my job is to detect breast cancer, and today I am here representing the 300 members of the Radiological Society of Connecticut in support of Senate Bill 259, *An Act Concerning Insurance Coverage for Mammograms*. The truth, however, is that I am here as a father of daughters, a husband, and a son, as much as a radiologist.

The RSC is delighted to support this legislation. It is a natural progression of the steps you've taken in recent years to increase the knowledge of, and access to, imaging tests that detect breast cancer, particularly for women who have dense breast tissue. A normal breast consists of both glandular tissue- which is dense, and difficult to evaluate, and fatty tissue, which mammograms evaluate well. To help you visualize the issue, think about the night-time sky on a cloudless night. Even without a telescope, it's easy to identify the Big Dipper. Now think about trying to find even the moon on a night full of clouds, with snow falling. That's the difference between a fatty breast and a dense breast.

As you can readily imagine, we need all the help we can get when the sky is cloudy, or the breast tissue is dense. It's no surprise that as the density of the breast increases, the ability to detect the most curable breast cancers decreases.

There is no doubt about the utility of these additional procedures. A large American College of Radiology study, the ACRIN 6666 trial, showed that breast ultrasound finds a substantial number of cancers that were not spotted by a mammogram—particularly for women who have dense or heterogeneously dense breast tissue. As a result, we supported the passage of last year's legislation that requires patients be given plain-language information on the tests they might want to discuss with their physician.

SB 259 would add Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) to the list of procedures covered by the law. It is a good addition, because studies have shown that MRI is, by far, the most sensitive and most specific means to detect the smallest breast cancers. It is not for everyone; it's not available everywhere; it is demanding of equipment and expertise, and is more costly than mammography or ultrasound. But for women who have a 20 percent lifetime risk of breast cancer, the American Cancer Society, The American College of Radiology, and the Societies of Breast Imaging and Surgery have endorsed breast MRI as a first line of screening.

MRI has been shown to be of significant benefit in women whose mammogram and ultrasound have revealed a potential problem that cannot be either shown to be normal, or

confirmed to need a biopsy. Finally, in women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, MRI finds unsuspected disease elsewhere in the same breast in 25 percent of the women—in other words, without the MRI, we would be leaving cancer behind or performing the wrong operation on a substantial number of patients.

One very good thing is that neither ultrasound or MRI involves the kind of radiation that x-rays have, and, therefore, do not carry the risks of those procedures.

This card is an invitation to a Bat Mitzvah for a 12 year old girl named Samantha. Her grandmother had breast cancer in her 60s. At 41, her mother Lori's mammogram looked like a snow-storm. Because her doctor recognized both her increased risk, and the limitations of her very dense mammogram, Lori had a breast MRI. That MRI exam found a biologically aggressive 3mm tumor that in all likelihood, would not have been detected without MRI until it was much larger and had spread. Now, three years later, Lori is disease free and celebrating with her daughter.

Connecticut's Radiologists are among the finest in the nation. They take their responsibility for patient care very seriously and are constantly adapting to the latest technologies that improve the chance of earlier detection of breast cancer. Senate Bill 259 will help in this regard and, on behalf of Connecticut's Radiologists, we are delighted to support it.

One update if I can. You passed legislation last year (Public Act 09-41) that provides a notice to patients of the availability of additional tests if they have dense or heterogeneously dense breasts. You will be pleased to know that our practices have implemented this new law aggressively. *Patients are getting new and better information about their treatment options as a result.* With this legislation, Connecticut physicians are providing, and patients are receiving, the information they need to receive the best individualized care. When we talk about transparency, this is what we mean.

Thank you again for permitting me to offer comments on SB 259.