



Appropriations Committee
February 22, 2012
American Cancer Society Testimony

Health and Hospitals Subcommittee re: Breast and Cervical Cancer early Detection Program cuts

The American Cancer Society is in strong opposition to the significant and continuing cuts made to the state Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program (BCCEDP) in the Governor's 2013 budget revision as well as those cuts made through his rescission authority in late January of this year totaling \$109,000.

During these challenging economic conditions it is understandable that difficult choices will have to be made. These are decisions that need to be made with careful and deliberate consideration, and we recognize the efforts of the legislature in achieving that end. As careful as these decisions need to be, there needs to be deliberation regarding the long-term effects that specific funding cuts may have. In 2012 it is estimated that approximately 21,530 Connecticut residents will hear the most horrible phrase, "you have cancer." If there are cuts made to the CT. Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program, the state will witness long-term health effects and significantly more dollars lost, not saved.

The state 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. These services cover routine screenings and exams in an effort to detect cancers at its earliest stages when the chances for survival are the greatest. To qualify, women must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and have either no health insurance, health insurance that excludes mammography or have a high insurance deductible (\$1,000 or more).

BCCEDP is a program of last resort as the uninsured women who qualify for BCCEDP are not eligible for Medicaid, are unable to secure private insurance and are unable to afford Medicare Part B, despite some being eligible for Medicare Part A coverage.

Breast and cervical cancers have alarming incidence and death rates for Connecticut residents. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women in Connecticut; furthermore the state has the second-highest incidence of female breast cancer in the nation and ranks 35th in the nation for breast cancer mortality. The survival rate for cervical cancer would be over 90% if all women over the age of 18 who are sexually active had a Pap test on a regular basis. While we have the prevention screenings available, without appropriate funding for this program, the screenings will not reach significant numbers of eligible residents.

According to the Dept of Public Health, BCCEDP Funding for 2010-2011 supported 10,500 women, a mere 3% of the target population ages for 19-54 to receive early detection and prevention services. In 2009-2010, the BCCEDP screened 9,628 women for breast and cervical

cancer; 57 were diagnosed with breast cancer, 25 were diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 149 were diagnosed with precancerous cervical changes.

The FY '12 budget reduction of \$243,106 in screening dollars as well as the Governors rescission of an additional \$109,000 will result in a 14% reduction in breast and cervical cancer screening, meaning approx. 1,514 women will not have access to this life saving program. Extrapolating, this could result in 7-9 undiagnosed breast cancers, 3-4 undiagnosed cervical cancers and 22 undiagnosed precancerous cervical changes. It is estimated that about one third of costs for fatal breast cancer were avoided through mammography screening, accounting for 72-81% of estimated total treatment cost savings achieved by screening. Savings in treatment costs offset about 31-35% of screening costs for 1987 to 1993.

As the numbers show, past funding has been inadequate with many eligible women unable to take advantage of the program as a result. Any action other than fully funding the program will more negatively impact the effectiveness of BCCEDP. Since 2010, women have been turned away from receiving screenings, and treatment sites throughout the state are unable to accept new patients. If we were able to fully fund preventative cancer screenings we could drastically reduce the number of cancer incidence and mortality rates. Cutting funds from this program reduces access to care in a time when we need to be looking for ways to increase access.

As these budget negotiations continue, the American Cancer Society stands ready and willing to work with members of the Appropriations Committee and other members of the Legislature to effectively establish a budget revision which adequately addresses this and other health care related concerns. Continuing to cut BCCEDP will only result in a greater number of lives being affected by cancer.

We strongly urge this committee to use this opportunity to reverse course and restore funding to the BCCEDP to pre-2012 levels.

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