



**Appropriations Committee
February 15, 2013
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Testimony**

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

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network 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 2014-2015 biennium budget.

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 also needs to be deliberation regarding the long-term effects that specific funding cuts may have. In 2013 it is estimated that approximately 21,180 Connecticut residents will hear the most horrible phrase, "you have cancer."

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 2011-12 supported 9194 women, less than 1% of the target population ages for 18-64 to receive early detection and prevention services. 33 were diagnosed with breast cancer, 21 ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS)—the most common type of non-invasive breast cancer, 4 were diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 21 were diagnosed with precancerous cervical changes.

A funding reduction of \$111,530 in screening dollars for FY '14 means approx. 400 mothers, daughters, sisters and wives across Connecticut will lose access to critical cancer screenings as a result. Extrapolating, this could result in an increase of undiagnosed breast cancers, undiagnosed cervical cancers and undiagnosed precancerous cervical changes.

Undiagnosed breast or cervical cancer at an early stage only means far greater costs for treatment when diagnosed at a later stage—such that the cost of treatment would far exceed the savings provided by these cuts.

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 Cancer Action Network stands ready and willing to work with members of the Appropriations Committee and other members of the Legislature to effectively craft a budget 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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