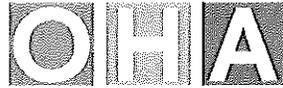


The logo for the Finance, Trade and Real Estate Committee (FTR) consists of the letters 'FTR' in a stylized, hand-drawn font.

Office of the
Healthcare
Advocate
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Testimony of Victoria Veltri
State Healthcare Advocate
Before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee
In support of SB 10
February 18, 2014

Good afternoon, Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, Senator Kelly, Representative Sampson, and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. For the record, I am Vicki Veltri, State Healthcare Advocate with the Office Healthcare Advocate ("OHA"). OHA is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health plans; and, informing you of problems consumers are facing in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

We support SB 10 to provide access to screening ultrasound for patients with dense breast tissue or at increased risk of breast cancer without the financial burden of deductibles, coinsurance, copayments, or other out-of-pocket expense. Screening is vital for detection of breast cancer at its earliest, most curable stage and is fully consistent with the principles of preventative care. Evidence has shown that mammogram screenings, currently covered at 100%, are ineffective for

some patients, especially those with demonstrated dense breast tissue, as defined by the American College of Radiology's BIRaD system. These patients should not be denied affordable access to preventative healthcare or financially penalized simply because initial mammography failed to yield an adequate clinical picture. Studies have found that patients with dense breast tissue are at a higher risk of breast cancer and their tumors are more likely to have certain aggressive characteristics, so principles of equity support the premise that adequate preventative screening, which we already acknowledge as having significant benefit, should be available to all women on an equal cost-sharing basis.

The Office of the Healthcare Advocate supports the principles of access to quality healthcare, evidence-based improvements to our healthcare system, and consumer maximization of value for their health insurance premiums. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of our state's 3.5 million healthcare consumers.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to deliver OHA's testimony today. If you have any questions concerning my testimony, please feel free to contact me at victoria.veltri@ct.gov.