

Good Afternoon,

I am Gerard Campion and with me is my wife Margaret Campion. We thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Bill 112.

Last October I spoke at the State House in Boston in support of the proclamation of the third week of October as Male Breast Cancer awareness Week. I was invited to speak because of my participation in a male breast cancer support group at the Dana Faber Cancer Hospital in Boston.

Eight years ago I was diagnosed with male breast. I knew men could get breast cancer because a friend had battled the disease. That awareness led to early detection and treatment. I lived cancer free for almost five years. Three and a half years ago I was diagnosed with recurrent metastatic disease. The breast cancer is now in the form of lesions on my bones. It has not yet spread to other organs and I along with my wonderful doctors and family are fighting to prevent that from happening.

I have made it my mission to spread the word about male breast cancer. I have raised over ten thousand dollars for the Closer to Free Fund at the Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale. I am an ongoing speaker at Rotary, Lions, and Exchange Clubs in the state. My wife and I were interviewed on the weekend Today Show.

Awareness is crucial. Because of awareness my diagnosis was early. The cancer had spread to just three lymph nodes. In most male breast cancer cases, early diagnosis is rare. It is usually caught much later and the prognosis is bleak. Later diagnosis usually means more aggressive treatment which affects the quality of life as well as the outcome. I became very aware of that while participating in the Dana Faber support group. There were seven men in our group; four have died, two are very sick. I continue to spread the word.

Eighty percent of men in this country do not realize they too can get breast cancer. At least 2,000 men will be diagnosed in the United States this year. Breast cancer is not just a female disease. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. That designation has had a tremendous impact on the diagnosis and survival rate of women around the country. I know because I am one of those women. Yes, I too was diagnosed with breast cancer and am now five years cancer free. Gerard and I have an interesting perspective. Not many couples can say they know what it is like to have had breast cancer and also be the spouse of someone that has had breast cancer. We can say that and we do.

Awareness is the key. Because of early detection and treatment my husband has been able to live a vital life. He has been able to see his first grandchild born, walk our youngest daughter down the aisle, travel, run his own business, and celebrate this June our fortieth anniversary.

He has battled this disease with strength and dignity. I ask you to please help him spread awareness of male breast cancer by designating the third week in October as Male Breast Cancer Awareness Week. This simple act will save and increase the quality of life for men in the state of Connecticut. Yes, Gerard is battling a terminal illness but we know firsthand how early detection has enabled us to live our lives and make memories. Please help us help other men and their families do the same.

Thank you