RSC Radiological Society of Connecticut, Inc.
A Chapter of the American College of Radiology

Testimony of the Radiological Society of Connecticut (RSC)
In opposition to HB 6553
Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 17, 2015

Chairmen and members of the committee, the Radiological Society of Connecticut, the RSC, represents over 400 physicians in Connecticut who practice the specialty of diagnostic radiology in hospitals and/or our own offices in the community. We also represent medical physicists who help assure the quality of the equipment we use. The RSC is opposed to H.B. 6553, *An Act Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Breast Thermography*, because the technique of thermography is unsubstantiated, and its use is not supported by any major medical, scientific, governing or regulatory body that relies upon scientific data.

Thermography is based upon the theory that temperature rises in areas with increased blood flow and metabolism, which could be signs of some tumors. However, because thermography maps heat only on the surface of the breast, only very large tumors, and those located immediately beneath the skin fall into this category, and even then, only some of the time. At this point in time, there is NO scientific evidence to support the use of thermography, as either a screening or diagnostic test for breast cancer. The danger of thermography, according to the FDA, is that patients who substitute thermography for mammography may miss the chance to detect cancer at its early stage.

The Radiological Society of Connecticut strongly believes that legislation should not support scientifically unfounded procedures. As an organization, we were among the first in the country to endorse breast screening ultrasound, but only did so after a major scientific study confirmed its benefits. When, and if, thermography demonstrates scientifically proven benefit, we will readdress our position. Until then, we agree with the position statements of organized medicine, including:

The American Cancer Society (ACS) has classified thermography as a method that is ineffective as a screening tool based on clinical evidence (Smith et al, 2003) stating that "no study has shown that thermography is an effective screening tool for the early detection of breast cancer." (ACS, 2010)

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA): The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has warned women that breast thermography should not be substituted for mammography as a screen for breast cancer. In 2011, the FDA issued an alert warning the public about misleading claims by thermography practitioners and manufacturers on the screening benefits of the tool. To date, the FDA has not approved a thermography device for use as a stand-alone to screen or diagnose breast cancer." The FDA has gone on to issue warning letters to some health care providers who have been promoting the inappropriate use of thermography. Helen Barr, MD,

director of the Division of Mammography Quality for the FDA, in the FDA's News Release of 6/2/2011 stated "Women should not rely solely on thermography for the screening or diagnosis of breast cancer."

The Susan G. Komen For the Cure, the nation's largest breast care philanthropy, has opposed thermography, stating on their website, "Thermography cannot distinguish between benign and cancerous patterns. "

The American College of Radiology, our parent organization, states that "Thermography has not been demonstrated to have value as a screening, diagnostic or adjunctive imaging tool. We are pleased that the FDA has taken this step (issuing a Warning to providers and patients) to clarify its view on thermography. Thermography is not a substitute for mammography screening...which remains the gold standard for breast cancer screening." (ACR website)

Finally, the Society of Breast Imaging's position is that "The Society of Breast Imaging does not currently support the use of thermography/ infrared imaging of the breast as either a screening tool in the detection of breast cancer or as an adjunctive diagnostic tool....There are currently no studies supporting the use of thermography alone or as an adjunct to mammography that show clear benefits of the technique. " (SBI position statement from SBI website)

The above statements are in contrast to the universal support for mammography, which is appropriately reflected in Connecticut statute. Innumerable scientific studies, analyzing mammography in hundreds of thousands of women worldwide, have confirmed that mammography saves lives, with an annual decrease in breast cancer mortality of 2-3% every year since 1990. Furthermore, mammography, unlike thermography, is highly regulated by the 1992 Mammography Quality Standards Act, such that every facility offering mammography meets quality standards set forth and enforced by the FDA, with respect to equipment, personnel (radiologists, technologists and physicists), and reporting. It is unlawful to perform mammography in the USA without an FDA certificate.

The Radiological Society of Connecticut strongly concurs with all of the above named organizations in its support of mammography, and joins with organized medicine in opposing support for thermography, until such time as its benefit can be scientifically demonstrated. Until then, we concur with the Society of Breast Imaging, and the American College of Radiology in recommending that women should have regular mammograms according to guidelines or as recommended by their health care provider.

We are concerned that supporting it at the legislative level might encourage women to forego mammography for an unproven test, and in so doing, will miss out on the best way to detect early breast cancer: mammography.