

The Connecticut General Assembly



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE GARY TURCO TESTIFIES IN STRONG SUPPORT OF SB 358 *Bill before Insurance and Real Estate Committee would expand health insurance requirements for treatment used to diagnose breast cancer*

State Rep. Gary Turco (D-Newington) testified on Tuesday during an [Insurance and Real Estate Committee](#) public hearing in strong support of [SB 358](#), which would expand health insurance requirements for treatment used to diagnose breast cancer, including mandated coverage with no out-of-pocket cost for detection tests such as mammograms, ultrasounds and MRIs.

According to the [Connecticut Breast Health Initiative](#), an estimated 3,500 women in Connecticut are diagnosed annually with breast cancer. The rate of female breast cancer in Connecticut's population is 136.6 per 100,000 residents, the second-highest number in the U.S. after Washington D.C., and considerably higher than the overall rate of 122.7 per 100,000. In addition, female breast cancer is the leading cause of new cancers.

The five-year survival rate for all women diagnosed with breast cancer is nearly 90 percent, depending on the stage. The five-year survival rate for Stage 4 breast cancer is 26 percent. When breast cancer is diagnosed early and confined to the breast, the five-year survival rate increases to 99 percent.

Pushing for passage of SB 358 is personal for **Rep. Turco** as his mother is a three-time breast cancer survivor.

"She was lucky that the cancer was detected all three times early enough to receive treatment and be a survivor," said **Rep. Turco**. "I ask legislators to join with me and help save the lives of women and men, save precious funds for our constituents, and save money in the health care system and even for insurance companies by encouraging individuals to seek tests that will detect cancer early rather than result in very costly treatments. This legislation is a win-win for all of Connecticut."

In 2019, the General Assembly passed landmark legislation that mandated insurance coverage without out-of-pocket costs for ultrasounds and MRIs for the early detection of breast cancer. These tests detect breast cancer when a mammogram does not provide a clear reading, often due to dense breast tissue. Without these additional tests, a woman may have early-stage breast cancer, undetectable through a mammogram.

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According to **State Rep. Kerry Wood (D-Newington, Rocky Hill, Wethersfield)**, co-chair of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, SB 358 will close an important loophole left by the 2019 law.

"After the 2019 legislation passed, women throughout Connecticut with fully insured health plans continued to receive out-of-pocket charges for their early detection tests because the tests were coded as 'diagnostic' and not 'screening,'" said **Rep. Wood**. "It is essential that this loophole is closed to ensure women do not delay getting an ultrasound or MRI if abnormalities are detected."

The House of Representatives passed a version of this bill last year during the regular session by a vote of 145-1. However, the Senate did not have enough time to take up the bill before the session ended. So, this year, the bill started in the Senate.

Breast cancer survivor and advocate Jan Kritzman, a Newington resident who has worked closely with legislators, said while "we can't prevent breast cancer, but we must eliminate any financial barriers to receiving essential diagnostic follow-up testing like mammograms, ultrasounds and MRIs, following an inconclusive screening mammogram, especially for the 40 percent of women with dense breast tissue."

"SB 358 ensures no out-of-pocket costs or meeting outrageous deductibles, co-pays, co-insurance or cost-sharing. Our legislators are the only ones that can make this happen," Kritzman said. "I don't know how many women in Connecticut missed their annual mammograms in the past two years because of Covid, but dozens have admitted to me that they were either delinquent or negligent and are now paying the price of a later-stage breast cancer diagnosis."

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