

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chairman Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and
Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to give this proponent testimony on HB 371, to increase breast cancer screening accessibility and early detection to patients. Mammography is the first line of breast cancer detection. Years ago, when it wasn't covered by insurance companies, I fought and passed legislation ensuring women would have access to this life saving exam. Today, the fight continues.

I am here with Representative Denson, to introduce a bill that will utilize modern technology in detecting breast cancer. I became aware of the need for this legislation when my close friend found out she had Stage 4 breast cancer. In 2014, her mammogram showed she had dense breasts. What the images failed to show was a small tumor hidden inside. Four years later the tumor grew large enough to be detected with 20-year-old technology. The cancer also spread to other parts of her body. Using modern technology coupled with additional screenings would have caught this tumor at its earliest stage. The radical surgery, chemotherapy, and radiology would have been unnecessary.

HB 371 allows all women to have tomosynthesis during all visits, which is an improvement in mammogram technology. Women of any age will be eligible for a mammogram every year, and not limited based on age, risk factors, or multi-year waiting periods. If dense breasts are detected, they will receive an updated letter describing the underlining risks they may have and suggesting they may need additional screening to clearly detect breast cancer. Digital breast tomosynthesis – which is like a mammogram, but provides better quality images for more accurate diagnoses – is included in the definition of a mammogram.

This bill also ensures that women who are diagnosed with dense breast tissue will have full access to primary and supplemental breast cancer screenings and be made more aware of the risks they may have. Supplemental breast screenings are any additional screening deemed necessary by the health care provider in accordance with the American College of Radiology, including MRI's, ultrasound or molecular breast imaging. Women and their primary care providers together will decide if additional screenings are necessary – not insurance companies.

Commercial insurance companies and Medicaid will be required to cover the cost of these supplemental breast screenings for adult women who have dense breast tissue, have had a prior history of breast cancer, or have an ancestral or genetic predisposition to breast cancer as determined by a health care provider.

One in eight women will get breast cancer. Seventy-five percent will have no prior history of breast cancer in their family. Women with dense breasts will have a greater risk of breast cancer. We know early detection is the key to survival. Early detection also reduces the cost to fight and hopefully cure breast cancer. Most importantly, we know that the human cost – to families, employers, and society – when a woman fights for her life is enormous.

We have advanced technology to identify breast cancer at its earliest state. This bill will make sure we are using it.