

Sherry Hughes Testimony for House Bill 371

Good morning. My name is Sherry Hughes. I am from Cincinnati, Ohio and I represent myself. I am a breast cancer survivor!

Madam Chair:

I am here in support of House Bill 371. This bill will save lives and provide better care to hundreds of thousands of women and men diagnosed with breast cancer. I know this because I am living proof of what this bill represents. It represents more screening options for women with dense breast tissue and women who are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer due to close family history among other things.

I lost my mother to breast cancer 30 years ago. She was just in her 40s. We had no family history. Her diagnosis placed me and my siblings at a higher risk for developing the disease. So, we've stayed vigilant.

I began having mammograms in my 20s and have performed monthly self-breast exams every month. I've lived a healthy lifestyle. Stayed physically fit. I had never had an abnormal mammogram or any breast issues until the day I was diagnosed with invasive ductal carcinoma, breast cancer. The diagnosis came in July of 2019. It came as a total shock because nothing was wrong with me. I was incredibly healthy, or so I thought. There was no lump, no pain, no sickness of any kind to indicate a silent killer was growing inside of me.

So how was it discovered? I say divine intervention that began with a simple question to my OBGYN, Dr. Amy Thompson. I asked what else besides a 3 D mammogram could I get? What else was out there that could give us a different look at what was going on inside of me and help us stay on top of things.

She told me about the breast MRI. I told her I wanted it. Being that nothing was wrong, she said it would likely be an issue getting my insurance to cover it. While I had always gotten clean reports on my mammograms, there were references to dense breast tissue on my reports. I didn't fully understand the implications. Dr. Thompson saw a path forward though based on breast density and of course my close family history. So, she pushed for it. In fact, she relentlessly petitioned my insurance provider to allow me to get the breast MRI. Months later, in 2018 it was approved but for the following year.

In July 2019, I was finally able to get the additional breast screening. The breast MRI. I wasn't expecting it to show anything but to provide another kind of baseline for future reference should we need it. To my surprise and the surprise of my doctor, it did show something. A suspicious mass in my breast. Two subsequent follow-up 3D mammograms were ordered but neither could see the mass. My radiologist wouldn't stop there. She aggressively searched for the suspicious thing seen on the breast MRI. Forty minutes and 3 biopsies later, she found it. It was an aggressive breast cancer barely the size of a small grain of rice, it was already stage 2 and growing.

I underwent six rounds of aggressive chemotherapy, surgery, five weeks of radiation, and a year of immunotherapy. It was a difficult and emotional process that I pray no one else must endure. But we know it will happen to someone else. It's happening right now. That is why I stand before you to ask that you please support House Bill 371. This bill WILL save lives and improve the quality of life for more women hearing those hard words "You have breast cancer."

Today, I am in remission! Praise God! I am a survivor! If the breast MRI had not been approved, I would probably NOT be standing before you today as a survivor, asking you to please support House Bill 371. I believe this bill WILL save more lives and improve the quality of life for more women like me and yes men too.

Thank you for your time.