

October 13, 2021

The Honorable Jean Schmidt and Sedrick Denson

Ohio House of Representatives

77 S. High Street Ste. 12

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Representative Denson and Representative Schmidt,

One in eight women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer during the course of her life. I am one of the eight. January 19, 2021 my life and the lives of those closest to me were forever altered as I read the results of my biopsy. I had been diagnosed with Ductal Carcinoma in Situ and Invasive Ductal Carcinoma; doubtless that you will not find it difficult to translate those medical terms to the one we are most familiar with; breast cancer.

I compose this letter in support of H.B. No. 371. Prior to my diagnosis I had my first mammogram January 7, 2020. During a self-examination in December 2019, I noticed I had a lump in my left breast with similar feeling in my right. Being under the age of 40 my gynecologist wrote me a prescription to be screened. The diagnosis I received as a result of that screening was simply that I had very dense breast tissue, no cancer could be detected, and was instructed to come back in a year for my next mammogram. By September 2020 I noticed some outward changes in my left breast and felt immense pain each time my young son would attempt to rest his head on my chest. By the time I was seen by my gynecologist, it was near time for me to have my yearly mammogram. Due to the increase in lumps in my left breast and other symptoms, I was written a prescription for an ultrasound in addition to the regular screening mammogram I was due to receive. It was not the screening mammogram that detected my cancer even the second time.

During my screening mammogram, the tech left the room and came back to do more imaging on my left side at the request of the radiologist. After asking several questions and demanding answers, I was told I was now receiving a 3D mammogram. After the diagnostic mammogram, I was sent to the ultrasound room to have a scan where I heard several clicks indicating that the tech was capturing images of what she may feel was problematic areas in my left breast. The radiologist came in and spoke with me informing me that he was sending me to a breast surgeon to have a biopsy done. On the morning of my biopsy, I had another ultrasound and which led to me having an ultrasound biopsy in addition to the mammogram biopsy I was already scheduled to have. Dense breast tissue makes it more difficult for radiologists to see cancer as they both appear white on imaging increasing the risk that cancer will be missed. Small areas of cancer

can hide behind the dense tissue, and it's challenging to tell the difference between normal, healthy tissue and abnormal growths.

Mammograms can miss about half of cancers in women with dense breasts. In addition, women with dense breasts are more likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer within the year after receiving a normal mammogram result, usually based on symptoms such as a lump or other breast changes. As I reflect on the year I have had and what I have endured; a bilateral mastectomy, chemotherapy, countless blood draws, radiation, hormone therapy, injections, the changes in my stages and grade of my cancer, and so forth, I think about how my life could have been different if I would have received a diagnostic mammogram or even an ultrasound in January 2020. This is why H.B. No. 371 is important as there is a need for expanded access and coverage from insurance companies for breast cancer screening including diagnostic mammograms and ultrasounds. I could go on in my testimony giving countless examples of the physical challenges and psychological disturbances I have experienced as a result of having cancer and the ongoing treatments I must participate in to lower my recurrence. However, I will just illuminate that expanded access and coverages can be life changing and lifesaving and it is with sincere hope that this bill is passed to help many women like me who have dense breast tissue. I am medically considered cancer free, but I will never be free from cancer.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tonisha R. Elder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Tonisha R. Elder