

## Jan-Michele Lemon Kearney's Testimony for October 14, 2021

My name is Jan-Michele Lemon Kearney, and I am a nine and half year breast cancer survivor. I used to go for annual mammograms and do almost monthly self-checks – when I remembered. One day, I had a mammogram and the physician evaluating it said there might be something there, but it was unclear. He gave me a pass, and I was relieved.

The problem was that like so many women, especially African American women, my breasts were dense and it was hard to tell if the little white blip on the mammogram x-ray was just a gland or cancer.

Dense breasts have less fat tissue and more glands than less dense breasts, and those glands show up white on the mammogram xrays as do tumors. In short, with denser breasts, it's hard to tell if the white markings on the x-ray are indicative of cancer or glands.

In my case, when I went for my next mammogram, there was more concern. I was sent for a biopsy and as it turned out, I had breast cancer. By this time, the cancer had progressed. When the lumpectomy revealed that the cancer had spread to some of my lymph nodes, I had to have a double mastectomy. The choice before me was either save my breasts or save my life. I have two children and a wonderful husband, and opted for LIFE.

Speaking of my husband, former Ohio Senate Minority Leader Eric H. Kearney, I was very happy when a bill that he proposed in 2014 with Sen. John Eklund was passed: It required mammography facilities to include in their written report the information that dense breast tissue could hide abnormalities, and encourage further discussion with their physicians. When Gov. Kasich signed the bill into law, Ohio became the 20<sup>th</sup> state to have a dense breast tissue notification law.

The bill before us today, H.B. 371, sponsored by Rep. Sedrick Denson and Rep. Jean Schmidt, is a huge step in saving lives. With a 3D x-ray, the physician who first wasn't sure whether he saw cancer on my mammogram x-ray would have had more information, and he would have sent me for a biopsy immediately. For me, this would have meant that I would have received treatment BEFORE the cancer further progressed. For me, this would have meant that I would not have had to lose my breasts. For others, this would mean that they would not have to lose their lives.

Passing Reps. Denson and Schmidt's H.B. 371 means that our elected officials care about women and women's health. It means that they are prioritizing women's lives above powerful insurance company lobbyists.

It means that they understand that life is precious.