



House Bill 371 – Proponent Testimony
Senate Health Committee
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Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 371, which would require health insurers and the Medicaid program to cover supplemental breast cancer screening if certain conditions are met. My name is Dr. Yasmin Mekhail, and I am an associate staff physician in the department of Diagnostic Radiology and Breast Imaging at Cleveland Clinic.

The Cleveland Clinic Imaging Institute is continuously working to provide patients the most up-to-date technological advances and innovative treatment options. Cleveland Clinic Imaging combines physician leadership of a subspecialty academic practice with state-of-the-art equipment in an easy to access, comfortable and convenient outpatient environment to provide the highest quality experience and result available.

As a breast radiologist, I work closely with patients as they receive mammograms and breast cancer screenings through the Cleveland Clinic Imaging Institute. One of the factors that is assessed during a mammogram is breast density. Approximately 40-50 percent of women in the US age 40-74 have dense breasts. A dense breast has areas where there is more glandular and connective tissue than fatty tissue. There may be a slightly increased risk for breast cancer if a patient has dense breast tissue. Having dense breasts can also decrease the sensitivity of a mammogram, because an abnormality in the breast can be obscured by the surrounding similar appearing (dense) tissue. If a patient has dense breast tissue, their doctor may also suggest supplemental screening such as ultrasound or MRI, based on the patient's risk assessment.

Currently, it is state law to inform patients that they have dense breast tissue via written correspondence. However, supplemental screenings (such as ultrasound and MRI) are not currently covered by most health insurers or by Medicaid. House Bill 371 will change this by requiring that insurers and the Medicaid program cover supplemental breast cancer screening. This would increase access for all women to have density- and risk-appropriate screening for breast cancer. Additionally, the bill will revise the aforementioned letter in order to improve the message to the patient by adding language that informs the patient about their options and encourages them to discuss their appropriate screening regimen with their healthcare provider.

In summary, this bill empowers patients to seek appropriate screening by teaching them about breast density and supplemental screening as well as increasing their access to appropriate care. Again, Cleveland Clinic supports House Bill 371 and urges the committee to be supportive as well. We thank the bill sponsor, Representative Jean Schmidt, for championing this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony, and I am available to be contacted with any questions you may have.