

TO: Members of the Senate Health Policy Committee  
FROM: Chris Mitchell, Senior Director, Advocacy  
DATE: May 8, 2014  
SUBJECT: Senate Bill 879 – Breast Density Reporting Mandate  
MHA Position: **OPPOSE**

The Michigan Health & Hospital Association (MHA) strongly opposes Senate Bill 879, which would require women with dense breast tissue to be notified of their status and that other, more advanced technologies besides mammography are available to further address the problem. **The MHA asserts that Senate Bill 879 seeks to codify medical best practice and technology, which is known to change over time and could add unnecessary health care costs to patients.**

Breast density reporting legislation is largely unsupported in the medical community. Several groups, including the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, American Cancer Society, American Society of Radiologists and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality all agree that the significance of breast density as a risk factor is highly controversial. There is no consensus that density in itself is a sufficient risk to warrant supplemental screening, such as a Breast Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). **Even with other technologies available, mammography screening combined with clinical breast examination remains the best technique for early breast cancer detection.** Largely, because of mammography screening, 63 percent of breast cancers are diagnosed at a localized stage, which has a five-year survival rate of 97 percent, according to the American Cancer Society.

In the absence of evidence that evaluation of these patients produces a clear health benefit, the information a clinician would provide to patients would likely vary as the assessment of breast density is not reliably reproducible. When the same mammogram is interpreted by a different physician or by the same physician on different occasions, differing density can be reported. If these variations are reported to each woman screened on each occasion, it might result in confusion or an impression of the lack of reliability of mammography.

Additionally, Senate Bill 879 could cause a proliferation of health care services, which could ultimately increase costs to patients and businesses that provide health insurance for their employees. Unless supplemental screenings are reimbursed by insurers, there may be an unfortunate disparity between women who can afford to pay for the additional screening exam and those who cannot.

**The MHA and other opponents of the bill argue that this effort to legislate the practice of medicine could set a dangerous precedent for other potential medical issues. While the MHA and its member hospitals remain committed to provide high quality and cost effective health care to every patient, regardless of the ability to pay, the MHA urges you to oppose Senate Bill 879.** Please contact Chris Mitchell (cmitchell@mha.org) at (517) 703-8622 at the MHA if you have further questions on this issue.