

**Gail H. Straith
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May 5, 2014

Via email to KDeBano@senate.michigan.gov

The Honorable James Marleau
Chair, Senate Committee on Health Policy
Michigan Senate
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Support for Senate Bill 879; Breast Density Education and Awareness

Dear Senator Marleau:

As a recent breast cancer survivor whose tumors were not detected by a mammogram, I encourage you to support SB 879. I am sending my strong and heartfelt personal support for this bill relating to breast density education.

I am very grateful for early detection of my tumors in October 2013, thanks to an ultrasound that was done solely due to the grace of life. My annual mammogram in September did not reveal anything of concern. Neither my own nor my doctor's manual examination revealed anything of concern. The ultrasound was done merely to monitor a skin lesion that had been followed for a few years as "nothing of concern, but let's keep an eye on it"; that ultrasound revealed two tumors unrelated to the tiny nodule being monitored. A biopsy confirmed that I had invasive ductal carcinoma. Fortunately, my cancer had not spread into my lymph nodes.

But for that ultrasound, I wonder how many years might have passed before an annual mammogram would have detected the tumors. It's a scary thought to think that the cancer might have become more aggressive in the meantime and spread, resulting in a very different prognosis. The costs, from both a personal health perspective and from an economic perspective, would likely have been much higher. [I had a lumpectomy, followed by radiation therapy with a shorter-than-normal course of treatments.] From a financial perspective, the added cost of more radical surgery and chemotherapy would have increased the cost of my treatment by many thousands of dollars.

I am a well-educated woman who has her own law firm. I have always received the recommended mammogram screenings for breast cancer. Although I was aware that I have dense, fibrous breast tissue, I never knew that (a) dense tissue might increase my risk for breast cancer, and (b) mammograms often fail to detect cancer in dense tissue. Understandably, I am a

huge fan of ultrasounds ... and sharing information about breast density issues with other people. In essence, I am a "poster child" for this bill.

I was lucky to find my cancer at an early stage by a fluke. Let's make sure that other women have important information so they don't have to rely on their luck. Please support SB 879.

Thank you very much for your thoughtful consideration of this issue. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. My direct line at my office is (248) 220-1965.

Very truly yours,

Gail H. Straith

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