


Good afternoon ~~Chairman (2013) Lister~~ and members of the committee. My name is Mary Tello-Pool and I am here to provide support for House Bill 1283. In March of this year, I will proudly celebrate my 52nd year in the nursing profession. I am amazed at the enormous strides I have witnessed in the last 52 years in terms of diagnostics and treatment of many diseases...including breast cancer. I have held the hands of many patients and also close personal friends, who were shocked into disbelief, by hearing the words "you have cancer". I have also listened to their concerns and worries associated with the burdens of additional costs to further diagnose and treat their cancer. I am here today not only as a nurse, but also as a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a sister, and a friend, who just so happens to also be a breast cancer survivor. Three months ago, my routine mammogram indicated I had small microcalcifications. As a nurse, I thought...no big deal, that is common in women my age...especially in women with dense breasts. I had absolutely no indications or symptoms of breast cancer. I had none of the typical markers...there were no lumps, pain, or lesions, I never used tobacco, didn't drink alcohol, ate healthy foods, exercised on a regular basis...and rarely even had so much as a common cold. At any rate, my doctor encouraged me to undergo further testing. I trusted my doctor's opinion and consented to undergo a stereotactic breast biopsy. The biopsy samples were sent

to pathology for examination. At this point, my case was no longer considered preventative, but rather diagnostic. I assure you, these tests are not tests that women frivolously seek...or tests that doctors perform without careful consideration. Trust me, there is no thrill in having a large bore 10-gauge needle inserted into your breast. A few days after my biopsy, I received a call from my doctor and was told the pathology samples indicated I had DCIS-Ductal Carcinoma in Situ, which is a fancy Latin name for cancer in the breast ducts. It is a sneaky silent dangerous cancer that can quickly spread outside the ducts with no warning. I then underwent an ultrasound biopsy of my breasts and my sentinel lymph nodes (the nodes in the armpit area that the cancer cells like to latch onto and travel to other parts of the body). That procedure was followed by an MRI, which was performed to determine the extent of the cancer, and to determine my treatment plan. Even with my many years of medical knowledge and experience, the news was difficult to process. The flurry of additional tests and numerous doctor visits that followed were at times overwhelming. I have always been a woman of faith and that faith brought me calm in the midst of this cancer storm. The hardest part for me, was having to tell my husband and children, and to see the concern and worry in their faces. The support of my daughters (one of which is the brilliant physician you heard from earlier, who ironically specializes in breast cancer diagnosis) was invaluable.

However, it was my 10 year-old granddaughter who said, "Don't worry Mimi, we got this" that made me realize this is but a bump in the road. Nine weeks ago, both of my breasts and my sentinel lymph nodes were surgically removed. I am still recovering. In the future, I will need regular MRIs to determine if the cancer has returned. The MRIs have been shown to demonstrate the most accurate extent of cancer disease. If medical experts say these diagnostic tests are necessary, then I believe they should be covered at no cost to patients, just as preventive screenings are. I do believe there are significant cost savings if breast cancer is identified and treated in its early stages. I am an example of that. I believe they saved my insurance carrier thousands of dollars by avoiding any future lengthy hospitalizations and long-term cancer treatments and therapies. I am one of the fortunate ones, but having to choose between paying rent and getting the testing needed can be a serious dilemma for many other women. I also believe those tests are the reason I am here today. Quite simply put, those diagnostic tests saved my life. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story and my reasons for supporting this bill.

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