

## **Breast Density Notification and Awareness** **House Bill #467 and Senate Bill #519**

**PURPOSE:** The CSW requests that the North Carolina General Assembly amend the current standard of care and require that all women in North Carolina be provided their individual breast density level, based on the Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System (BIRADS) as defined by the American College of Radiology. Currently a screening mammography report (lay letter) provided to patients in North Carolina does not include information about breast density. There are four (4) levels of breast density and the only way to identify density is through a mammogram. Women with heterogeneously dense or extremely dense breast tissue (the 2 higher categories) could have abnormalities that are not easily visible on a mammogram. Dense breast tissue may also increase the risk of developing cancer. Knowing their breast density will help women better understand that supplemental screening test may be beneficial if they fall into one of the “dense categories”. In 2009 the state of Connecticut was the first of 6 states to recognize the importance of this issue.

**SUMMARY/ BACKGROUND:** The City of Greensboro’s Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) initiated the “Greensboro Breast Density Awareness” program in September of 2011. Addy Jeffrey, a resident of the City of Greensboro and breast cancer survivor inspired the awareness program after learning that her breast density may have obscured her cancer on a mammogram. The CSW with the support of breast cancer survivors, conducts outreach through workshops and media. CSW has collaborated and received educational support from Dr. Margaret Bertrand, a Diagnostic Radiologist.

**PROVISIONS:** The Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA) requires that a summary of the written report shall be sent directly to the patient in terms easily understood (lay letter) within 30 days of a mammography examination. The CSW urges the State of North Carolina to add the following requirements at FDA approved mammography facilities:

- 1- Each lay letter shall include the patient’s individual breast density level based on the Breast Imaging Reporting and Data System (BIRADS). There are four (4) categories of breast density.
- 2- Each patient shall be given the American College of Radiology’s brochure about breast density. These brochures shall be provided to all women that receive a mammogram.
- 3- When it is determined that a patient has heterogeneously or extremely dense breasts (the 2 higher categories) the following statement shall be included in the lay letter:

*“Your mammogram indicates that you have dense breast tissue. Dense breast tissue is a relatively common condition. Although common, both cancerous and noncancerous abnormalities may be more difficult to distinguish against a background of dense breast tissue. Dense breast tissue may be associated with an increased risk of breast cancer and you may benefit from supplemental screening tests as suggested by your physician. We are also providing this information to raise your awareness. Speak to your physician about all risk factors”.*

**JUSTIFICATION:** The American College of Radiology Susan G. Komen For the Cure, The American Cancer Society, The Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. National Institutes of Health all state that having dense breast tissue may increase your risk of getting breast cancer. Dense breasts also make it more difficult for doctors to see cancer on mammograms. Dense tissue appears white on a mammogram and lumps, both benign and cancerous, also appear white. Mammograms can be less accurate in women with dense breasts.