

Women's imaging specialists

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Georgia on Track to Be the 37th State with Dense Breast Legislation Thanks to GA House Bill 62

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ATLANTA--(BUSINESS WIRE)--On Monday, February 11th, 2019 the Georgia House passed House Bill 62, paving the way for Georgia to become the 37th state with legislation requiring that women who receive a mammogram be notified about their breast density and the implications it could have. Breast density is one of the most common reasons for the failure of a mammography to detect cancer and presents unique challenges for breast cancer patients and providers. Because dense breast tissue has the potential to mask cancerous tumors in mammography results, many women don't learn they have breast cancer until their disease has reached an advanced stage.

"I hope that the Senate will pass this bill soon as well so that all women in Georgia will be informed about their breast density and that some of them can be spared what I had to go through."

The bill was introduced by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R), chair of the Health & Human Services committee thanks to awareness raised by Georgia resident Margie Singleton. Margie received a delayed diagnosis of breast cancer in 2018 because her tumor was missed on earlier normal mammograms because it wasn't visible due to the dense breast tissue.

Since 2009, thirty-six states have passed similar legislation, started by the efforts of the late Dr. Nancy Cappello and the AreYouDense? Advocacy organization. Nancy created this organization after her dense breast tissue resulted in a Stage 3c breast cancer diagnosis six weeks after receiving a "normal" mammography report. She championed dense breast legislation first in her home state of Connecticut and then expanded her reach nationally.

Section 1, lines 35-43 of House Bill 62 states:

"If a patient's mammogram demonstrates dense breast tissue, the health care facility that conducted the mammogram shall provide notification to the patient that includes, but is not limited to, the following information, in the summary of the results of a mammography examination that is sent directly to a patient pursuant to 42 U.S.C. Section 263b:

Your mammogram shows that your breast tissue is dense. Dense breast tissue is very common and is not abnormal. However, dense breast tissue can make it more difficult to detect cancer through a mammogram. Also, dense breast tissue may increase your risk for breast cancer. This information about the result of your mammogram is given to you to increase your awareness. Use this information to talk with your health care provider about whether other supplemental tests in addition to your mammogram may be appropriate for you, based on your individual risk. A report of your results was sent to your ordering physician. If you are self-referred, a report of your results was sent to you in addition to this summary."

Who does this bill affect? 95% of women do not know their breast density and less than one in 10 women learn about their dense breast tissue from their doctors. Not just women are impacted by breast cancer diagnoses, as this disease affects family members, friends, and loved ones as well. According to the National Breast Cancer Organization, 1 in 8 women are diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. As women with dense breast tissue are at a higher than average risk of breast cancer, this bill could have a significant impact on breast cancer detection in the state of Georgia if passed.



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