



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

Senator Flanagan Announces “Breast Density Inform” Bill Signed Into Law By Governor Andrew Cuomo

JOHN J. FLANAGAN July 24, 2012

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Senator John J. Flanagan (2nd Senate District) and Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee (95th Assembly District) announced that Governor Andrew Cuomo has signed the “Breast Density Inform” (S.6769-B) legislation they sponsored into law. The legislation, which passed both the Senate and the Assembly unanimously, will help women in the fight against cancer by ensuring that women are informed of their own “density” and that other screening options

may be helpful in early detection.

The measure would require that every mammography report given to a patient with dense breast tissue inform the women in plain, non-technical language that she has dense breast tissue and that she should discuss the potential benefit of further screenings with her physician.

According to leading medical studies, breast cancer is four to six times more likely in women with dense breast tissue, and mammograms fail to detect approximately 40% to 50% of tumors in dense tissue since this condition obscures their presence. Despite those facts, a recent Harris Interactive survey found that 95% of women do not know their breast density even though it is a risk factor, and less than one-in-ten women learn about breast density from their physician.

Senator Flanagan's efforts to pass this legislation began three years ago when he was contacted by JoAnn Pushkin, one of his constituents who is a breast cancer survivor-turned-advocate and Executive Director of Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc.

"Simply put, this legislation is about saving lives. Supplied with information about their own breast density, women will now be empowered to discuss additional screening options with their physicians. Many women are unaware that breast density is linked to an increased risk of breast cancer and that dense breast tissue can make it difficult to detect tumors by mammography alone. With the approval of this new law today, women will have better health care information to pursue other screening options to find cancers early; when they are most treatable and survivable. I applaud Governor Cuomo for signing the bill into law, and I thank JoAnn Pushkin for her tireless efforts in advocating on this critically important issue and in helping to make this the most comprehensive breast density inform law in the country," stated Senator Flanagan.

Assembly Member Ellen Jaffee said, "I thank the courageous advocates who have worked tirelessly to get this law passed. Now those with dense breast tissue, which can mask tumors, will be able to get the information needed to determine with their physicians whether further screening is recommended. My hope is that this law will lead to earlier detection and save lives."

Ms. Pushkin's cancer went undiagnosed for five years because her annual mammograms were unable to detect a tumor obscured by her dense breast tissue. She is a leader in the effort to raise awareness about this issue and has worked closely with Senator Flanagan and Assemblymember Jaffee in bringing this life-saving new law to New York. She continues to advocate for the enactment of similar laws in 12 other states and at the federal level as well.

"JoAnn is one of the most important driving forces behind this new law. She turned her own personal situation into a crusade to improve the lives of all New York women and deserves our thanks for her tireless advocacy. The impact of her work and her dedication will benefit our entire state for years to come," added Senator Flanagan.

"The signing of the 'Breast Density Inform' bill is the end of a three-year effort to bring awareness and protection to the women of New York and a great sign of how government can operate. The willingness of both Senator Flanagan and Assemblymember Jaffee to listen to one woman from Long Island to gain unanimous passage of this important legislation shows that the system does work. They, along with Governor Cuomo and the other legislators who voted for this legislation, deserve credit for taking the time to hear the voices of those who have been affected by this issue and for acting to make sure that other women will not have to suffer the same way," said Ms. Pushkin.

Currently, Connecticut, Texas, and Virginia are the only states in the nation with Breast Density Inform laws; 13 other states have introduced legislation that would establish such

statutes, as has the U.S. House of Representatives.

The “Breast Density Inform” law will take effect 180 days after being signed.

[Please click here to visit the Breast Cancer Information section of Senator Flanagan's web site for more information on the important issue of breast density and its connection to breast cancer](#)

[Click here to view story about this legislation from WABC](#)