

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS

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HB 285 Sponsor Statement

Breast cancer is both the most frequently diagnosed and the second deadliest cancer among women in Alaska. One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime, but when detected early, breast cancer can be successfully treated. Screening mammograms are covered under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as a preventative procedure, but diagnostic imaging to help diagnose cancer is subject to cost sharing (co-pay and deductible), costing patients hundreds to thousands of dollars.

A study published by the Radiology Society of North America found that these costs excluded some 21% of patients who need supplemental testing following an abnormal mammogram. Excluding patients from testing increases the likelihood that cancers are not treated early, risking harm to Alaskans at higher costs for employer-sponsored plans. This cost sharing requirement exacerbates healthcare access disparities in lower- and middle-income patients, who may be insured, but are unable to afford additional testing.

Early detection of breast cancer is crucial for survivability. This legislation would provide greater access to care, ensure prompt diagnosis of breast cancer, and reduce the overall cost to the patient and the health care system.