

February 26, 2024

House Labor & Commerce Committee
The Alaska State Legislature
120 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support of HB 285

Dear Chair Sumner, Vice Chair Ruffridge, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of AdvaMed, the MedTech Association, and the AdvaMed Medical Imaging Division, we are writing in support of HB 285, a bill increasing access to medically necessary diagnostic and supplemental breast imaging by eliminating the burden of patient cost-sharing. Simply, this legislation will help save lives and allow more families to enjoy additional meaningful moments together.

AdvaMed is the largest association representing medical technology innovators and manufacturers. Our members are the device, diagnostics, medical imaging, and digital technology manufacturers transforming health care through earlier disease detection, less invasive procedures, and more effective treatments. They range from the smallest startups to multinational corporations.

AdvaMed Medical Imaging Division represents the manufacturers of medical imaging equipment and focused ultrasound devices. Our members have introduced innovative medical imaging technologies to the market, and they play an essential role in our nation's health care infrastructure and the care pathways of screening, staging, evaluating, managing, and effectively treating patients with cancer, heart disease, neurological degeneration, COVID-19, and numerous other medical conditions.

We commend Alaska for its leadership on this critical issue for patients. While mammogram screens are fully covered by many health plans, follow-up diagnostic exams due to abnormal results often are not. Similarly, diagnostic exams are needed for women who are asymptomatic but have other pre-existing health conditions that put them at a higher risk of breast cancer.

Unfortunately, according to a recent study, the fear or frustration of unexpected or high out-of-pocket costs, causes many women to delay or forego needed exams in

these situations.¹ Physicians also agree that cost is the primary reason women do not follow-up after their initial mammogram screening.²

Screening is also often underutilized in underserved populations, exacerbating health inequities.^{3,4} The rate of cancer screening is lower among racial and ethnic minority populations, compared to the white population. Further, cancer outcomes are often worse in minority populations compared to the white population.⁵

Additionally, under-utilization of critical screening services was further compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic. As has been reported, screening fell dramatically over the last few years, potentially increasing the burden of cancer and other disease on the American public.^{6,7,8,9}

Screening saves lives, reduces suffering, and lowers costs for patients. Unfortunately, it is underutilized. This legislation enables patients – and their families – to focus solely on what is best for their health, rather than on whether or not they can afford needed, life-saving exams.

AdvaMed and the AdvaMed Medical Imaging Division are proud to support this legislation that puts patients first.

Sincerely,



Darbi Gottlieb
Director, State Government &
Regional Affairs
AdvaMed



Adrienne Frederick
Senior Manager, Health Policy & State
Government Affairs
AdvaMed Medical Imaging Division

¹ <https://www.komen.org/news/new-susan-g-komen-study-unveils-high-cost-of-diagnostic-tests-for-breast-cancer-serves-as-a-barrier-to-needed-care/>

² Id.

³ <https://www.auntminnie.com/index.aspx?sec=sup&sub=imc&pag=dis&ItemID=139085>

⁴ <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-cancer-outcomes-screening-and-treatment/>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Changes in Cancer Screening in the US During the COVID-19 Pandemic, JAMA, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2792956>

⁷ Association of Cancer Screening Deficit in the United States With the COVID-19 Pandemic, JAMA Oncology <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33914015/>

⁸ A national quality improvement study identifying and addressing cancer screening deficits due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cancer, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35307815/>

⁹ The Impact of COVID-19 on Cancer Screening: Challenges and Opportunities, JMIR Cancer, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7599065/>

