

June 9, 2008

The Honorable Denise Ducheny
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SUPPORT- The Assembly Budget Committee's Action to Restore \$2.0 Million to the Every Woman Counts Program (Breast Cancer Early Detection Fund).

Dear Senator Ducheny:

On behalf of the Disability Rights Legal Center and the Cancer Legal Resource Center, we would like to express our strong support for the Assembly Budget Committee's action to restore \$2.0 Million to the Every Woman Counts Breast Cancer Early Detection Program to offset the devastating impact of the proposed 4.2 Million cut.

As you are aware, because of a reduction in Prop 99 cigarette and tobacco tax funds, Prop 99 support for the Every Woman Counts (EWC) program has been cut by 4.2 Million. However, the program also receives funding from the Breast Cancer Control Account (funded from a separate 2 cent component of the cigarette tax). The budget estimates that the account will have a reserve of 6.2 million in 08-09. An augmentation of 2 million for the Every Woman Counts program from the Breast Cancer Control Account would partially offset the reduction in proposition 99 funding. Komen for the Cure shares your concerns about relying on Prop 99 funding as it is a declining and unstable revenue source. To that end, we are actively searching for alternatives outside of the General Fund to assist the program in future years. The short-term solution of appropriating 2 million will allow EWC to continue early detection services by covering 15,000 more screenings this year.

There is no known cure for breast cancer – or any known way to prevent it. However, timely screening mammograms could prevent 15 to 30 percent of all deaths from breast cancer in women over age 40. If breast cancer is found and diagnosed while still confined to the breast, the five-year survival rate is more than 98 percent. The message is simple: early detection is saving lives.

The Every Woman Counts program, which is part of the California Department of Health's breast and cervical cancer screening program, is the last line of access to screening for thousands of women in California. Over 21,000 women are diagnosed

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with breast cancer every year in California and more than 4,000 will die of the disease. EWC is a critical program that saves lives, yet it reaches too few, even at its current funding level. According to the Department of Public Health, approximately 1.2 million women are eligible for breast cancer screening and more than 1.8 million are eligible for cervical cancer screening. But it is estimated that only 270,000 women will be served by EWC in 2007-08 due to funding constraints. We are reaching only between 15-20 percent of the need. Restoring \$2 Million to the program from the Breast Cancer Control Account will offset the devastating cut and benefit women in your community and throughout the state.

The Proposition 99 unallocated account funding proposed to be cut is used exclusively for paying the clinical claims for mammograms, or claims made on screenings. This would be a direct cut to services women receive to ensure early detection. With respect to the clinical claims budget, it would reflect a 12 percent decrease. Assuming a 12 percent decrease in services from the existing level, the cut would represent approximately 32,000 fewer women able to be served in 2008-09.

For these reasons, we ask for your support when this item is heard before the Budget Conference Committee. For questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me at 213-736-8195.

Sincerely,

Paula D. Pearlman, Esq.

Cc: The Honorable Members of the Budget Conference Committee
Dan Rabovsky, Assembly Budget Committee
Diane Van Maren, Senate Budget Committee
The Honorable Karen Bass
The Honorable Mike Villines
The Honorable Don Perata
The Honorable Dave Cogdill