

House Health & Human Services H 7276 Testimony

My name is Colleen Converse, and I am not only a breast cancer patient, but a RI Susan G. Komen Advocate as well. Last session, I shared my personal cancer story from my diagnosis in 2019. Tonight I share Chapter 2 of my cancer journey,

In early June, I was advised to undergo a Breast MRI, but my life changed dramatically on June 19, 2025. On June 19th, I checked my email like on any other ordinary day. With such irony, there were two new emails on my screen, literally back to back. The first email came from Angelica Katz from Susan G. Komen, letting me know that the RI Breast Imaging Bill was unable to be brought to a House Legislature Floor Vote. Then my eyes fixed on the second email, which was a notification that my Breast MRI results had come back. As I logged into my portal, I learned two suspicious bilateral masses were found.

I felt as if my heart had sunk into my stomach. My physician soon called to review the next steps, which would be a Diagnostic Mammogram, Breast Ultrasound, and MRI Assisted Biopsy. Over the next weeks, I waited for results, and I stayed awake all night, full of anxiety, night sweats, and spent my waking moments, researching molecular cell structure in malignancies, worrying about how anyone was supposed to afford thousands of dollars in a single moment's time, most middle class Rhode Islanders do not have an extra \$5000 lying around, needed in a single month to determine if they have breast cancer, in this economy.

After undergoing more breast surgery, I was diagnosed with malignant breast cancer again. I soon was rushed into radiation treatment, and I recently started hormone therapy, which has side effects of such debilitating pain that some days, I can barely function. This is going to be my life daily for the next 5 years.

Thirty states have passed breast imaging legislation, including every other state in New England, and RI is still lagging behind. Why is that? It would

cost an increase in insurance premiums, less than a cup of a small coffee annually. Human lives should not be political. Cancer patients should not constantly have to advocate for the right to live. As patients, we feel as if RI does not believe our lives are worthy enough to prioritize this vital legislation, that will actually save insurance companies money through early detection. Cancer patients do not have time. We are busy fighting for our lives, day after day. As Rhode Islanders, we can do better. What's better than saving human lives? And for less than a small cup of coffee annually is all that it would cost.