



Oncology Nursing Society

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Senator Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

Senator Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

January 19, 2024

Dear Senators Schumer and McConnell,

Oncology nurses are privileged to support people with cancer through the entire cancer experience, from diagnosis and treatment into survivorship or as they face their end-of-life journey. The mission of the Oncology Nursing Society is to lead the transformation of cancer care and promote excellence in oncology nursing and quality cancer care. As such, we encourage you to pass S. 1840, *the Screening for Communities to Receive Early and Equitable Needed Services (SCREENS) for Cancer Act*, which would reauthorize the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (NBCCEDP). As you know, this bill, sponsored by Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), passed unanimously out of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee late last year.

For more than 30 years, the NBCCEDP has provided access to breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services, and if needed, treatment, for women who have low incomes and are uninsured and underserved. Early detection of breast and cervical cancer is critical to increased survivorship. When caught in its earliest stages, the five-year survival rate for breast cancer is 98-100 percent, as compared to later detection where this rate drops as low as 31 percent.ⁱ When cervical cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, the 5-year relative survival rate is 91 percent. However, when cervical cancer is diagnosed after it has spread to nearby tissues, organs, or regional lymph nodes, the 5-year relative survival rate is 60%.ⁱⁱ

Reauthorizing this program is even more critical, given the impact of COVID-19 on early detection. Researchers found that between January to October 2020, screening rates for breast cancer dropped by 47 percent and cervical cancer screening rates dropped by more than 52 percentⁱⁱⁱ. While rates have begun to slowly recover, disparities still exist, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities and lower-income individuals, and the SCREENS Act is essential toward maintaining and escalating this trend.

The NBCCEDP is critical to saving lives and saving costs to the healthcare system. We look forward to working with you to reauthorize this important program and increase cancer survivorship rates. For more information, please contact Jaimie Vickery, ONS' Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy, at jvickery@ons.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dayna Gardner".

Dayna Gardner, PhD, RN, NPD-BC, OCN®, CCRN-K
President, Oncology Nursing Society

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brenda Nevidjon".

Brenda Nevidjon, MSN, RN, FAAN
CEO, Oncology Nursing Society

About ONS The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) is a professional organization of over 35,000 registered nurses and other healthcare providers dedicated to excellence in patient care, education, research, and administration in oncology nursing. ONS members are a diverse group of professionals who represent a variety of professional roles, practice settings, and subspecialty practice areas. Oncology nurses are leaders in the healthcare arena, committed to continuous learning and leading the transformation of cancer care by advocating for high quality care for people with cancer.

ⁱ Surveillance Research Program, National Cancer Institute. SEER*Explorer. Breast Cancer – SEER 5-year relative survival rates, 2013-2019, by stage at diagnosis, female, all races/ethnicities, all ages. Accessed on January 16, 2024. <https://seer.cancer.gov/explorer/>, 2023.

ⁱⁱ *Cervical cancer prognosis and survival rates*. National Cancer Institute. Accessed on January 16, 2024. <https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical/survival#:~:text=The%205%2Dyear%20relative%20survival%20rates%20for%20cervical%20cancer%20are,relative%20survival%20rate%20is%2060%25>, 2023 .

ⁱⁱⁱ Teglia F, Angelini M, Astolfi L, et al: Global association of COVID-19 pandemic measures with cancer screening: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA Oncol* 8:1287-1293, 2022