



To: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

From: Jerry Slaughter
Executive Director

Date: February 16, 2012

Subject: SB 407; Mammography examinations

The Kansas Medical Society appreciates the opportunity to appear today in support of SB 407, which requires all mammography reports in the state of Kansas to include information regarding the density of the patient's breasts, and encourages the patient to discuss the limitations of mammography in patients with dense breast tissue, as well as other risk factors, with the patient's physician. Legislation which promotes increased awareness in women about their health issues, particularly relating to breast cancer, while also encouraging them to discuss their specific risk factors with their personal physician is good public policy.

Pursuant to the federal Mammography Quality Standards Act regulations, mammography facilities are already required to prepare a written report of the results of mammography examinations and send the reports to the patient's referring physician. Additionally, facilities are required to communicate with the patient via a written report in lay terms regarding the examination findings. SB 407 simply enhances the report a patient will receive from the mammography facility by making them aware of the limitations of mammography, particularly in cases of where breast density is a contributing factor, and a reminder that the referring physician has received a detailed examination report including specific information about the patient's breast density.

The twin objectives of the bill – to increase patient awareness, and to encourage meaningful patient/physician discussions about breast cancer, its diagnosis, and its associated risk factors – is a laudable public goal. This legislation should strike a balance between providing meaningful information to patients without creating unnecessary alarm. Our belief is that the patient notice language should be clear, concise, easily understood, free of medical or technical jargon, and informative without being alarming. Several states have introduced legislation to encourage awareness about breast density and mammography limitations in the hopes that informed women will be better equipped to identify their individual risks for breast cancer. The Kansas Medical Society supports the effort to better inform patients and would encourage the adoption of concise language which does not overly alarm or confuse the patient. To that end, we would like to suggest the following language for the notice as described in Section 1 (a):

“Mammography has known limitations. One of these is dense breast tissue, which can hide abnormalities. A report of your mammography results, which includes information about your breast tissue density, has been sent to your physician. This statement is intended to raise your awareness and promote discussion with your physician regarding your test results. Depending on your individual risk factors, your physician may recommend additional tests. You should contact your physician if you have any questions or concerns regarding this report.”

This language does not represent a substantive change to the original language in the bill, but is a more concise notice of the limitations of mammography without causing undue alarm. While we support informing patients about their health and individual risk factors, we want to be cautious about creating undue alarm on the part of the patient.

Legislation such as this can help facilitate earlier diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer, as well as promoting greater awareness among patients. We urge your support of the bill, and thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.