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News

Rep. Tercyak proposes legislation calling for insurers to cover breast thermography

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NEW BRITAIN — State Rep. Peter Tercyak, D-New Britain, has proposed a bill that calls for health insurance to cover a test he says is key to the early detection and treatment of breast cancer. The legislation would require health insurance coverage for breast thermography.

“Early detection is critical to successfully treating breast cancer,” said Tercyak, a registered nurse. “We should not be prevented by insurance companies from using the best tools available.”

Thermography is a more sensitive screening and detection procedure than mammography. When added to a woman’s breast health examination it substantially increases the likelihood of detecting pathologies associated with the breast.

Not a substitute for mammography, thermography is a supplement for patients at high risk. It allows for earlier diagnosis for at-risk women, which can increase their chances of being properly diagnosed. This, in turn, increases their chance of survival. In fact, studies suggest thermography can detect cellular anomalies in breast tissue eight to 10 years before any other test.

Tercyak thanked the Connecticut Breast Health Initiative for bringing thermography to his attention.

“With this bill we can ensure that all Connecticut residents have access to quality health care,” he said. “Thermography is a great tool that can detect breast cancer well before any other test.”

Connecticut Breast Health Initiative, Inc. was founded in 2004 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Its mission is to make a difference locally in the fight against breast cancer through education and research, and to find a cure for breast cancer. Connecticut is currently ranked 35th in the nation for breast cancer mortality — a major challenge. For this reason, 100 percent of funds raised in Connecticut stay in Connecticut.

“The Initiative is all about breast cancer research in Connecticut,” said Tercyak, “not just helping patients pay for wigs.”

“Peter and his sister, Stephanie, a [breast cancer] survivor, have been a longtime supporter of the initiative, and the work we do — to make a difference locally in the fight against breast cancer through education and research.” said Joyce Bray, CTBHI president.

Tercyak said the measure has been referred to the General Assembly’s insurance committee. He believes it has a good chance of eventually becoming legislation.

"There's a program at Duke University that trains physicians how to read thermography images," he said. "I hope we can lure somebody away from Duke who will start a similar program at UConn."

In Germany, thermography is the mainstream diagnostic tool for breast cancer, Tercyak pointed out, adding, "Early detection saves money in the long run and is less invasive than mammography."

"When it comes to the issue of breast cancer, Peter will do his all to raise awareness of what are best routine behaviors and the best detection tools for women," said Bray. "He also believes that research is the beginning of the end of cancer, especially in Connecticut."

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