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April 29, 2014

The Honorable James Marleau  
 Chair, Senate Committee on Health Policy  
 Michigan Senate  
PO Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: SB 879 Breast Density bill Support

Dear Senator Marleau:

I am an owner of Pitsch Companies in Grand Rapids, MI and a resident of Grand Rapids. Teresa Hendricks-Pitsch is my wife. I was her caretaker during her grueling breast cancer treatments, surgeries, chemotherapy, and reconstruction. I attended every doctor's appointment; I waited through every surgery, scan, procedure and test. I changed her bandages, drained her tubes, tracked her pain meds, gave her shots, and administered her ice caps during every chemo session. I prepared her targeted nutritional meals and drove her to every appointment. I fielded questions, concerns and visits from family and friends, so she could concentrate on healing.

Her cancer was missed 100% of the time, over a 10 year period, by relying solely on annual mammograms. We learned that her breast density caused her delayed diagnosis, and led to the cancer growing undetected, until it got into her lymph nodes. She found the lump herself, just months after her last "normal/negative" mammogram. Breast density was her only risk factor, and though it is a substantial risk factor, no doctor ever informed us of this, -- until after she found the cancer herself.

I strongly support Senator Hildenbrand's Breast Density Education bill, SB 879. It is critical that other women like Teresa have the information they need to avoid a delayed diagnosis. Radiologists should not be allowed to tell patients their mammogram is "normal/negative" when they know they cannot see through the dense tissue. They should be required to let the patient with dense breasts know she has an increased risk factor for cancer and that is not likely to be found by mammogram alone. With this bill, we can save lives.

Pitsch Companies has 100 employees, many of whom are women, or are married to women, who rely on our health plan to take care of them. We cannot keep health care costs low if we do nothing in support of early diagnosis and prevention. More importantly, we cannot save the lives of our mothers, wives, daughters and sisters if they are never informed of their risks.

Sincerely,

Lewis Pitsch  
 Vice President

Amy Pethers	Sanitary Division Manager
Tina Tankersley	Controller
Cindy Gloe	Payroll Clerk

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