

## Lou Mansolillo

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**From:** Heather Murphy <hmurphy1230@gmail.com>  
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**To:** House Health and Human Services Committee  
**Subject:** Written Testimony March 19 2024

Good evening, Chair Representative, Susan Donovan, Vice Chairman Representative, Joshua Giraldo, and House and Health and human services committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and support of House bill 7737, which relates to coverage of medically necessary, diagnostic breast, and supplemental imaging.

My name is Heather Murphy and I am a nurse practitioner and I reside in North Kingstown. I am here to represent the Oncology Nursing Society Rhode Island chapter. So that you have some background on my professional career, I have been a nurse in the care of women's oncology patients for 27 years. I have for the past seven years been practicing strictly in breast oncology now as a Nurse Practitioner. I hold staff positions at both Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island and at Dana Farber cancer Institute with a breast oncology team.

Every day I take care of women diagnosed with breast cancer. You would be very surprised with the number of stories of women who delayed breast imaging simply because they could not afford the medical bill that would come afterwards. It is maddening to know that we could have gotten to a patient much sooner should there not have been a financial barrier.

While we have excellent access in Rhode Island to screening mammograms, if there is a finding on this mammogram, the patient must present for extra diagnostic imaging, which might include ultrasound, mammogram, MRI or all of these modalities.

It is heartbreaking to see case for case of patients who delayed any breast imaging because they were fearful of a medical bill. We know that early detection of breast cancer, yield mmuch better outcomes.

It is estimated at about 12 to 16% of women's screened with our modern digital mammography will still require follow-up imaging.

Adequate and early screening gives us a better chance for cure and leads to fewer devastating radical surgeries and toxic treatments that are both expensive and disruptive to life.

We should be as a state, doing our best to remove any barrier for a patient to have their breast cancer, diagnosed without the fear of high out of pocket costs.

I am not only speaking to you today as a provider of care to breast oncology patients, but I'm speaking to you as a patient myself.

In January of this year I had my screening mammogram at a local diagnostic center, and I was notified that there was a breast mass that needed further imaging with Ultrasound and mammogram to be further understood.

You can imagine as someone who takes care of breast cancer patient every day, and as the daughter of a mother who has been through breast, cancer treatments, It was terrifying for me to think I would have a breast cancer.

Thankfully, I was scheduled in a very efficient manner, and only needed to have an ultrasound for the radiologist to know that the finding in my breast was benign. My relief was indescribable.

A few weeks later, I received a bill. I contacted my insurance company, and they informed me that because this was billed as a diagnostic study that this would not be covered and co-pay/coinsurance would be required. I tried to make the argument to both the insurance company and to the radiology team where my testing was performed that this study was necessary to complete my screening study. I could not convince anyone. So therefore, I had to pay a bill of a few hundred dollars. I will consider myself very lucky, firstly, and most importantly, because I had a benign diagnosis, but secondly, because I only needed an ultrasound. If I had needed a mammogram or an MRI, my costs could have been up to \$1000.

Now I have means, and I would've been able to figure it out, it would not have been simple, but I could have. Think of the many patients who do not have the same means I do and you do. This could be devastating to their families. And I can see why a patient would choose to delay imaging when they were doing their best to feed their children and heat their home.

Supporting this bill, supports all Rhode Island patients.

I know how deeply important it is for all cancer patients to have fair and equitable access to the breast imaging that may save their lives. As such a support house, Bill, 7737, and urge you to pass this critical legislation