



June 29, 2010

The Honorable Larry Kissell
U.S. House of Representatives
512 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kissell:

The Susan G. Komen for the Cure® Advocacy Alliance, Living Beyond Breast Cancer and the Breast Cancer Network of Strength have come together on behalf of breast cancer survivors to thank you for introducing H.R. 4662, the "Lymphedema Diagnosis and Treatment Cost Saving Act of 2010." We support your effort to address the persistent gaps in coverage of lymphedema diagnosis and treatment services in Medicare.

As you know, breast cancer survivors can develop lymphedema as a result of surgery or radiation to the lymph nodes in the armpit. Any woman who has breast cancer surgery and lymph nodes removed is at risk for developing lymphedema, and she remains at risk for the rest of her life. Fortunately, most breast cancer survivors do not get lymphedema. However, the women who do may face considerable pain, reduced movement, serious infections, emotional distress and a reduced quality of life.

Medicare does cover certain limited therapies and equipment related to lymphedema treatment; however, inconsistent interpretations of federal statutes mean incomplete coverage for compression bandages, garments, devices and specialized supplies required for daily clinical and home treatment of lymphedema. H.R. 4662 will improve access to lymphedema coverage within Medicare by removing ambiguities and clarifying coverage issues.

Without adequate coverage, women are exposed to significant out-of-pocket costs in pursuing treatment for lymphedema. These costs create barriers for some women, depriving them of the tools they need to adhere to the standard treatment regimen and putting them at risk for infection, hospitalization and further health problems.

We have much to learn about lymphedema. There is no standard screening test to diagnose lymphedema, and we need to know much more about how to treat it and how to prevent it. In the meantime, we must make sure all women who have undergone breast cancer surgery or radiation have access to the best screening methods and treatments available today.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Matt Moore, Sr. Public Policy Advisor with the Komen Advocacy Alliance (972.701.2021; mmoore@komen.org), or Janine Guglielmino, Director of Information and Strategic Initiatives with Living Beyond Breast Cancer (484.708.1542).

Sincerely,

		
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