

# California Breast Cancer Survivors and Advocates Call on State to Nix Screening Cuts

## ***Komen Affiliates Urge State Leaders to Spare Neediest Women from Budget Cuts***

SACRAMENTO, ([BUSINESS WIRE](#))-- Breast cancer survivors and advocates from all seven California Affiliates of Susan G. Komen for the Cure® signaled their alarm today (Dec 11<sup>th</sup>) at the recently announced cuts to California's *Every Woman Counts* program, which would effectively shut the doors to breast cancer screening services for 1.2 million low-income and uninsured women for the first six months of 2010.

Citing budgetary concerns, the state also announced that once they begin screening new patients this summer, only women age 50 and above will be eligible – significantly reducing the number of women in the state that will have access to affordable breast cancer screenings.

“We fully understand the tough economic situation our elected leaders face and the difficult choices they must make. Yet balancing the budget on the backs of our state’s neediest women is a mistake. We should not deny women who have very few options and limited resources access to screening and treatment services that may save their life,” said Donna R. Sanderson, Ed. D, Founder, California Collaborative of Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

*Every Woman Counts* (EWC) is a joint program by the state Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. Komen Affiliates noted that while 1.2 million women are eligible for EWC, the program only screens about 270,000 women a year, 77,000 of whom are under age 50.

The news about changes to EWC come on the heels of new mammography screening recommendations recently unveiled by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which generated significant controversy and confusion for women. Some have interpreted the guidelines as a recommendation against mammography for women age 40 to 49. In fact, the task force actually intended to encourage women to talk with their providers and assess their personal risk factors in deciding whether to have a mammogram. However it was intended, the potential for impediments to screening based on the guidelines exist.

“Women ages 40 to 49 must have access to mammography if they need it,” said Jennifer Luray, president of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Advocacy Alliance. “As states across the country struggle to balance their budgets, we will be watching to ensure the USPSTF recommendations are not used as a justification for slashing these critical services to women in need.”

Early detection of breast cancer is a key to surviving the disease. When breast cancer is detected early, the 5-year relative survival rate is 98 percent, but declines to 84 percent for regional disease and 23 percent when cancer has metastasized or spread to other parts of the body. Unfortunately, women with low incomes who are uninsured or underinsured — like those eligible for *Every Woman Counts* — are more likely to skip potentially life-saving cancer screenings, which leads to later diagnoses, larger tumors and lower survival rates.

In California alone, 21,700 women will have been diagnosed with breast cancer this year and more than 4,000 will have lost their battle with the disease.

“We know the need will continue regardless of the ability of the state to meet it. Komen Affiliates will continue to do our part to meet the needs of underserved women; yet, these resources are extremely limited and not available in all areas. We cannot do this alone,” said Sanderson. “Komen for the Cure and its Affiliates have long been concerned that one-third of women in the U.S. today — some 23 million — are already not receiving regular recommended screenings due to lack of access, education or awareness. Unfortunately, the decision to restrict access to the *Every Woman Counts* program makes the problem even worse.” Visit [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org) or call 1-877 GO KOMEN.

Source: Susan G. Komen for the Cure