

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH HEARING ENTITLED, "H.R. 1157, BREAST CANCER AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH ACT OF 2007, AND H.R. 758, BREAST CANCER PATIENT PROTECTION ACT OF 2007"

I am pleased that Chairman Pallone is holding this hearing to provide the Subcommittee on Health an opportunity to learn more about H.R. 1157, the "Breast Cancer Research and Protection Act of 2007", and H.R. 758, the "Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act".

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May 21, 2008

I am pleased that Chairman Pallone is holding this hearing to provide the Subcommittee on Health an opportunity to learn more about H.R. 1157, the "Breast Cancer Research and Protection Act of 2007", and H.R. 758, the "Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act". Breast cancer is the second most common type of cancer among women in the United States, and this Congress should closely examine how best to prevent and treat it.

One of the hopeful messages from cancer research is that most cases of cancer are linked to environmental causes and, in principle, can be prevented. Environmental factors such as exposure to excessive sunlight or to chemicals, cigarette smoking, diet and lifestyle can all contribute to an individual's chances of developing cancer. While it is known that certain genetic and environmental factors increase the risk of developing cancer, it is not known exactly which combination of factors is responsible for a person's specific cancer.

H.R. 1157 would provide for the development and operation of collaborative, multi-institutional centers for the purpose of conducting research on environmental factors that may be related to the etiology of breast cancer. Additionally, this legislation would establish a Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Panel at the National Institutes of Health. This Panel would be responsible for developing innovative approaches to study unexplored or underexplored interactions between the environment and the occurrence of breast cancer and outline the key knowledge gaps.

I look forward to taking a closer look at issues related to breast cancer and environmental research, and I am very interested in exploring how best to accomplish the goals of this legislation.

The other bill that is the subject of today's hearing is H.R. 758. This legislation is included as a part of the Patients Bill of Rights, which I have championed over the past decade. I was also a lead cosponsor when it was originally introduced as a freestanding bill.

H.R. 758 would ensure that women undergoing mastectomies would be guaranteed 48 hours of hospital care—unless the provider and patient determine a shorter stay is appropriate. The legislation would also protect physicians who provide quality care for breast cancer patients from retaliation by health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and other insurance companies seeking to maximize profits at the expense of patient care.

Guaranteeing that treatment decisions are made by the provider in consultation with the patient, taking into account the patient's unique medical needs, is the cornerstone of good medical care and an important part of what makes H.R. 758 a good bill.

One of my own staff from Michigan, Connie Shorter, was victim of these unscrupulous insurance company practices when she was sent home after a mastectomy in considerable pain with no support to manage her condition. Connie ultimately succumbed to her cancer, but the heartless way her insurance company treated her was an outrage.

I am pleased the Subcommittee is shining light on these issues of great importance to women and their families and look forward to the testimony of today's witnesses.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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