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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515-6115

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June 5, 2002

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**REAUTHORIZE THE MAMMOGRAPHY
QUALITY STANDARDS ACT**

Dear Colleague:

Tomorrow, I will introduce legislation to reauthorize the Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA) and I invite you to join me as a cosponsor. The text of the bill is identical to the legislation being introduced today in the Senate by Senator Barbara Mikulski.

We have a breast cancer epidemic in this country. An estimated 203,500 new invasive cases of breast cancer are expected to occur among women in the United States this year alone. Every three minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, and every 13 minutes a woman dies from this disease. On average, a woman dying of breast cancer loses approximately 19 years of life she might otherwise have had.

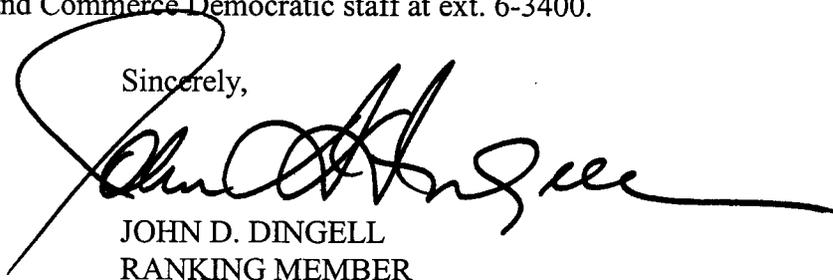
Breast cancer is a progressive and systemic disease, in which our ability to treat and cure a small tumor is much greater than our ability to treat and cure a large tumor. For this reason, it is vital that we ensure the safety, accuracy, and accessibility of mammograms for all women. The United States Preventive Task Force recommends screening mammography, with or without clinical breast examination, every one to two years for women ages 40 and over. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) have endorsed these recommendations. As HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson has said: "While developing technology certainly holds the promise for new detection and treatment methods, mammography remains a strong and important tool in the early detection of breast cancer. The early detection of breast cancer can save lives." High quality mammography, while not a perfect tool, is currently the best available tool for the early detection of breast cancer and MQSA provides our best assurance of that quality.

Originally enacted in 1992, and reauthorized in 1998, MQSA established a number of requirements aimed at strengthening mammography quality, including requiring accreditation and annual inspection of mammography facilities. MQSA required the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to establish quality standards for mammography equipment, personnel, and practices. It required that all mammography facilities be accredited once every three years and obtain a certificate from FDA. MQSA also required an annual evaluation of all mammography facilities by a qualified medical physicist and an annual inspection by FDA-approved inspectors.

LaSalle D. Leffall, Chair-elect of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Board of Directors, testified that, "Two of the crown jewels of health care policy in the United States – both of which came about in the last decade – are the Mammography Quality Standards Act and the CDC's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program . . . Since the MQSA enactment, women throughout the country have gained further confidence in their mammograms, as well as in those individuals and facilities that provide service as part of screening for breast cancer."

Please join me, as well as the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the National Breast Cancer Coalition, the FDA, the NCI, HHS, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, in supporting the reauthorization of this important and beneficial legislation. If you have any questions or would like to become a cosponsor, please have your staff contact John Ford of the Committee on Energy and Commerce Democratic staff at ext. 6-3400.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John D. Dingell", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JOHN D. DINGELL
RANKING MEMBER