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July 28, 2020

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Chair
House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Health Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Burgess
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Health Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Re: H.R.4078, The Breast Cancer Education and Awareness Requires Learning Young (EARLY) Act
Reauthorization of 2019

Dear Chair Eshoo and Dr. Burgess,

I'm writing on behalf of Susan G. Komen (Komen) to reiterate our support for H.R. 4078, the EARLY Act Reauthorization of 2019, in anticipation of your upcoming hearing on "Improving Access to Care: Legislation to Reauthorize Key Public Health Programs." Komen is the world's leading nonprofit breast cancer organization representing the millions of Americans who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Komen has an unmatched, comprehensive 360-degree approach to fighting this disease across all fronts -- we advocate for patients, drive research breakthroughs, improve access to high-quality care, offer direct patient support and empower people with trustworthy information. Komen is committed to supporting those affected by breast cancer today, while tirelessly searching for tomorrow's cures. We advocate on behalf of the estimated 279,100 women and men in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer and the more than 42,690 who will die from the disease in 2020.

Although many believe that breast cancer is diagnosed only in older women, approximately 11 percent of all new cases of breast cancer in the United States are found in women younger than 45 years of age. Breast cancer is also the leading cause of cancer death among women ages 20 to 39.

Recently, Ashley from Michigan shared part of her journey of unexpectedly being diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer in her twenties. "I noticed a lump on my right breast, my first thoughts were 'it's just a cyst,' but after being reminded by family members to go see a doctor about my suspicious lump, I finally made an appointment. My doctor immediately set me up for an ultrasound. From the ultrasound they did a mammogram the same day, nervous as heck I was still optimistic. After the mammogram I was seated in this room awaiting my results from the doctor. I remember her simply telling me 'we found a mass in your breast,' uneducated on breast cancer I was still lost on what was happening. It's like she didn't want to tell me upfront that I had cancer, it was like my results scared her out of the room. A biopsy was performed that same visit, three days later I was diagnosed with stage 4 ductal carcinoma. The next month, I received the news that my cancer had metastasized to my bones. Now at the age of 26, I think back and wish that I took what I discovered more serious. Young women can get breast cancer too, it doesn't wait until we're 40."

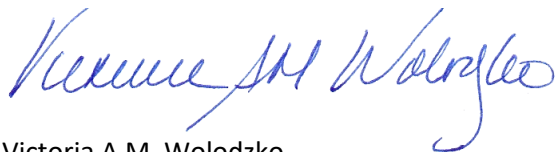
Originally signed into law in 2010, the EARLY Act has empowered the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify gaps in education between young women and their health care providers, provide grants to local breast cancer organizations that work in assisting young women, and create campaigns to educate the public that breast cancer is a disease that knows no age limits. The EARLY Act Reauthorization of 2019 (H.R. 4048) will ensure that this critical work continues and reauthorizes these programs at a higher funding level that is more commensurate with the need.

Komen has been a long-time supporter of the EARLY Act as we believe ensuring that young women receive evidence-based, age-appropriate breast health education is key to achieving our goal to save lives from breast cancer. Breast cancers in women under 40 can be different from breast cancers in older women, often resulting in a poorer prognosis. **Breast cancers commonly found in younger women are more likely to be fast-growing, higher grade, and hormone receptor-negative, all of which make the cancer more aggressive and more difficult to treat. This is why age-appropriate education and early diagnosis is so important for younger women.**

Programs targeting young women are also key to addressing the startling breast cancer health disparities affecting women of color. According to the most recent data available, breast cancer mortality is about 40 percent higher for Black women in the U.S. than white women. And, Black women are often diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer when treatment options are limited, costly and the prognosis is poor. While overall, breast cancer incidence among Black women is lower than among white women, recent data for women younger than 40 indicate a higher incidence among non-Hispanic Black women than non-Hispanic white women. Black women, on average, are also diagnosed with breast cancer at younger ages than white women.

Komen applauds Representatives Wasserman Schultz and Brooks for their leadership in introducing the EARLY Act Reauthorization of 2019 and we thank you for including the bill in your hearing on “Improving Access to Care: Legislation to Reauthorize Key Public Health Programs.” We hope this is just the first step the bill will take in the legislative process and we will continue our advocacy for this bill to become law during this Congress. Please contact Molly Guthrie, Komen’s Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, with any questions.

Sincerely,



Victoria A.M. Wolodzko
Senior Vice President, Mission
Susan G. Komen

Cc:
Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)
Representative Susan Brooks (R-IN)