



Dec 15, 2009

Via Telefax and USPS

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Office of the Governor
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the San Francisco Bay Area Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure® and the women and their families in the counties of our service area (Sonoma, Napa, West Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo, San Francisco and Marin), we wish to express our grave concern about the recently announced cuts to California's *Every Women Counts (EWC)* program.

Our affiliate, like the other 6 Susan G. Komen for the Cure Affiliates in California, raises funds and makes local grants for breast cancer education, screening and treatment programs for underserved women – uninsured and underinsured women. Since our affiliate's founding in 1987, we have funded over \$11 Million for programs at local SF Bay Area hospitals, clinics and tax exempt agencies serving uninsured and underinsured women. But, our philanthropy cannot meet all of the unmet needs – and we cannot cover the obligations of the State of California to serve those women.

The cuts to *EWC* will effectively shut the doors to breast cancer screening services for 1.2 million low-income, uninsured women for the first six months of 2010. When the program reopens in the summer, women age 40 to 49 will no longer be served. This decision significantly reduces the number of women in the state that will have access to affordable breast cancer screenings, potentially putting their lives at risk.

The situation is even more difficult because it comes on the heels of the new mammography screening recommendations recently unveiled by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, which generated significant controversy and confusion about the value of screening mammography in younger women. We do not want to see the USPSTF recommendations erroneously used by *EWC* to justify a cessation of all screening – including clinical breast exams -- for low income women in California.

We understand the tough economic situation you face and the difficult choices you must make to balance the state's budget. However, we understand that for fiscal year 2009-2010, the *EWC* fund has increased by over \$9Million from fiscal year 2008-2009 -- to \$61,314,811 from \$51,622,828. We therefore seek to understand the rationale to stop screening all women for the rest of this fiscal year and then only begin screening women age 50 and above at the outset of the next fiscal year. As women must earn less than twice the federal poverty level to qualify for *EWC*, it appears that California is balancing its budget on the backs of California's neediest women.

Early detection of breast cancer is a key to surviving the disease. Unfortunately, women with low incomes who are uninsured or underinsured — like those eligible for *EWC* — are more likely to skip potentially life-saving cancer screenings, which leads to later diagnoses, larger tumors and lower survival rates. And without *EWC*, many of these women will have nowhere else to go. 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. The decision to restrict access to the *EWC* program makes the problem even worse.

Governor Schwarzenegger, we respectfully request that you turn back these cuts and ensure the state's neediest women will continue to have access to lifesaving breast cancer screening services.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Buckner".

Amy Buckner
Affiliate President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maria Sousa".

Maria Sousa
Executive Director

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