



July 23, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Support for breast cancer patients in draft fiscal year 2022 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies funding bill

Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Blunt:

Founded in 1995, the American Society of Breast Surgeons (ASBrS) is the primary leadership organization for surgeons who treat patients with breast cancer and benign breast related diseases. We are committed to continually improving the practice of breast surgery. Our mission is accomplished by providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and by promoting education, research, and the development of advanced surgical techniques. ASBrS now has more than 3,100 members throughout the United States and in 35 countries around the world. Active membership is open to surgeons with a special interest in breast disease.

As the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies drafts a funding bill for fiscal year 2022, we request the inclusion of the following funding for programs that are crucial to early detection and treatment of breast cancer. As you may know, the House FY22 Labor/HHS legislation includes these provisions as well.

- **\$7 billion for the National Cancer Institute (NCI)**, which represents an increase of \$432 million above the FY 2021 enacted level. Besides its direct health impact, the pandemic also had a detrimental impact on routine cancer screenings. It is highly likely that we will be treating more advanced cancers in future years as a result, which will require an increased and sustained commitment by the federal government to research into all aspects of cancer care. As such, we strongly support the funding increase for the NCI.

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: \$230 million for breast and cervical cancer**, which supports the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. This program provides critical, lifesaving breast cancer screening and diagnostic services to women lacking adequate insurance coverage.
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: \$5.96 million for expanding awareness and prevention of breast cancer for young women**, which is a million dollar increase compared to last year. While women under the age of forty tend not to consider themselves at risk for breast cancer, approximately 5% of all breast cancer cases occur in this age group.¹ Moreover, the survival rates are worse in this group of women compared to older patients. Thus, we strongly support increased funding for educational campaigns and other programs that increase awareness of this disease among young women.

In addition, we ask that the Senate include report language similar to the House Committee report highlighting the concerning statistics related to metastatic breast cancer.

Metastatic Breast Cancer.—The Committee is aware that clinical research is of utmost importance to those living with metastatic breast cancer (MBC), which is breast cancer that has spread to other organs and become incurable. An estimated 168,000 Americans live with MBC, and nearly all of the more than 43,000 deaths from breast cancer are attributed to this late stage of disease. Given the mortality associated with MBC and the lack of treatment options, research offers the best possibility of therapeutic advances and extended life for these patients. MBC is also associated with startling health disparities, since breast cancer mortality is about 40 percent higher for Black women in the U.S. than White women, and breast cancer is the second most common cause of death by cancer for Black women. The Committee believes that a renewed emphasis by NCI on research for MBC, especially in communities of color, is needed to discover better treatments and a cure for MBC and to address health disparities in this population. The Committee requests an update on NCI’s activities regarding MBC in the fiscal year 2023 Congressional Budget Justification, including progress made with respect to inclusion of people of color in NCI-funded clinical trials in this area. (p. 112, House Report 117-96)

ASBrS strongly supports the Committee’s commitment to a renewed emphasis on metastatic breast cancer by the NCI, particularly research related to this late stage cancer among black women. A key goal we share with the Committee and with the NCI is to increase enrollment of black women in NCI-funded research related to metastatic breast cancer, and we strongly support the Committee report’s commitment to realizing this goal.

¹ Cleveland Clinic: “Breast Cancer in Young Women”; Available: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/16805-breast-cancer-in-young-women>.

We hope that this feedback is helpful as you consider and advance the Labor-HHS funding bill. If we can serve as a resource on breast cancer screening, diagnosis, and care during this important work, please do not hesitate to reach out to Sharon Grutman, Manager of Advocacy, Communications, & Quality Initiatives, at sgrutman@breastsurgeons.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Margenthaler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Margenthaler, MD, FACS
President
American Society of Breast Surgeons