GOVERNOR CUOMO SIGNS BREAST DENSITY BILL
NY WOMEN WILL KNOW THEIR BREAST CANCER RISK

WOODBURY, CT (JULY 25, 2012) - Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of New York signed into law Breast Density Information legislation. The legislation, which was sponsored by Senator John Flanagan and Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee and passed the NY State Legislature unanimously in June, makes New York State only the fourth state to require the inclusion of breast density information in the letter sent to women after their mammogram.

Cancer survivor turned advocate JoAnn Pushkin, who requested the legislation, was diagnosed with a later stage cancer only months after receiving a “normal” mammogram report. Pushkin was never told her dense breast tissue could dramatically compromise the effectiveness of her mammogram, nor was she referred on for further screening that might have detected her cancer earlier. A mammogram performed the same day Pushkin’s tumor was large enough to feel still failed to “see” her tumor—though an ultrasound revealed a tumor that had been growing for an estimated five years.

For decades, study after study has shown that breast density is the strongest predictor of the failure of mammography screening to detect cancer. As breast density increases, the ability of the mammogram to find cancer decreases, leading to cancers finally discovered when at a later stage. Breast density also increases a woman’s risk for developing breast cancer. According to the American College of Radiology, “Breast density in and of itself has been shown by several studies to be an independent risk factor for the development of breast cancer, with the relative risk for women with the most dense breasts 2 to 6 times that of women with the least dense breasts.”

Connecticut was the first state to enact Breast Density Notification legislation in 2009. According to Dr. Nancy M. Cappello, President and Founder of Are You Dense, Inc. and Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc., (AYDA), results from a Connecticut follow-up study about to be published found that the number of cancers detected nearly doubled when mammogram was supplemented with an ultrasound in women with dense breasts. “Extrapolated nationally, the data suggest that approximately 45,000 women annually leave their mammogram with a ‘normal’ result, though they actually have breast cancer invisible by
mammogram screening alone. New York’s Breast Density Inform law ensures that women are aware of the risks and challenge of their dense tissue – it is a major advancement in early detection.”

“Governor Cuomo’s signature is the culmination of a multi-year effort to ensure that New York women receive information about their own breast density. This bill was fought hard for by two legislative champions, Senator John Flanagan and Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffe”, said JoAnn Pushkin, who is also Executive Director of AYDA. “This bipartisan powerhouse team never wavered in their commitment to enact a Breast Density Inform law. Every woman in NY who now learns this critical piece of her own health history owes a deep debt of gratitude to both. Lives and a million tears will be saved with enactment of this law.”

The bill received the support of the New York State Radiological Society and The Medical Society State of New York as well as numerous nursing, patient and advocacy organizations. As detailed in Governor Cuomo’s official announcement the law becomes effective 180 days from signing.

Connecticut, Texas and Virginia have Breast Density Inform laws enacted. With the support of AYDA, thirteen states have introduced legislation this 2012 session and Federal Bill HR3102 was introduced last year.

**About Are You Dense, Inc. and Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc.**
Are You Dense, Inc. and Are You Dense Advocacy, Inc. work to raise awareness about Breast Density, its inherent cancer risk and screening challenges, through education, advocacy and legislation. For more information, visit AreYouDense.org or AreYouDenseAdvocacy.org

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