

The Breast Cancer Education and Awareness Requires Learning Young Act
“The EARLY Act” - H.R. 1740, S. 994

I. WHAT IS THE NEED FOR THE EARLY ACT?

- ✓ **Early detection can save lives.**
- ✓ **Early detection does not receive enough emphasis in health care for the young adult population.**
- ✓ **Young women diagnosed with breast cancer face unique challenges:**
 - Body Image: After breast cancer related surgery, young women face the challenge of embracing their new bodies.
 - Relationships and Dating: Intimacy issues as well as the increased stress on a relationship.
 - Career: Young women are often in the midst of beginning and building up their careers. Being diagnosed with breast cancer can interfere with day to day success at work and chance of promotion.
 - Fertility: Breast cancer treatment may prevent a young woman from having any children.
 - Financial Challenges: Breast cancer can dramatically impact a woman’s financial stability. Young women at the beginning of their careers are generally less well off and less likely to be insured.
- ✓ **Young women need emotional support targeted to their specific needs as young adults.**

II. WHAT DOES THE EARLY ACT DO?

The EARLY Act empowers young women to:

- ✓ LEARN the facts.
 - ✓ KNOW their bodies.
 - ✓ SPEAK up for their health.
 - ✓ EMBRACE support.
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- ✓ **LEARN THE FACTS:**
 - **Young women can and do get breast cancer.**
 - In 2008, the American Cancer Society projected 182,460 new cases of breast cancer in females – it was estimated that 10,000 of these women would be under 40 years of age. 28,000 would be under the age of 45. And about 8 of those young women die every day.¹
 - Although the incidence of young women with breast cancer is much lower than in older women, young women’s breast cancers are generally **more aggressive** and result in **lower survival rates**.²
 - Certain ethnicities – including **Ashkenazi Jews, and African American young women under the age of 45** – have an increased risk of breast cancer.³

¹ American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures 2007-2008*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, Inc.

² American Cancer Society. *Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2007-2008*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, Inc.

³ Ibid.

- African American women have a higher incidence rate of breast cancer before age 40 than Caucasian women.⁴
 - African American women of all ages have a higher mortality rate from breast cancer than Caucasian women.⁵
 - African American women under 35 are more likely to have basal-like type breast cancer, which is a more aggressive form of breast cancer.⁶
 - Ashkenazi Jewish women are more likely to have a mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene. Women with an altered BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene are 3 to 7 times more likely to develop breast cancer than women without alterations in those genes.⁷
 - Women with an altered BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene also often develop breast cancer at a young age (before age 50).⁸
- ✓ *KNOW YOUR BODY:*
- The EARLY Act encourages young women to be familiar with the look and feel of their breasts.
 - By knowing what feels normal, a young woman has a better chance of knowing when something feels different.
 - The EARLY Act also works to educate young women about changes in their body that could be warning signs of breast cancer – we want them to know that it doesn’t only start with a lump. It can be swelling, a rash, breast pain, nipple pain, redness or scaliness too.
- ✓ *SPEAK UP FOR YOUR HEALTH:*
- The EARLY Act encourages young women to be their own voice, speak up for themselves, and know when they need to go to the doctor.
 - It arms them with the confidence to stand up to anyone who tells them “you are too young for breast cancer.”
 - The EARLY Act also lets young women know that genetic counseling is available to them, and encourages them to inquire about these tests with their doctors.
- ✓ *EMBRACE SUPPORT:*
- The EARLY Act provides grants to organizations dedicated to supporting young women diagnosed with breast cancer.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ithemelandu CU, et al. “Molecular breast cancer subtypes in premenopausal African-American women, tumor biologic factors and clinical outcome.” *Annals of Surgical Oncology*. 10 (2007): 2994-3003

⁷ “Genetic Testing for BRCA1 and BRCA2: It’s Your Choice.” *National Cancer Institute*. 2002.

<<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/risk/brca>>

⁸ Ibid.