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## Gov. Rauner's Proposed Budget Cuts Put Women at Risk

*Critical cancer fighting programs face drastic cuts*

**Chicago, IL** - In response to Gov. Bruce Rauner's proposed state budget, Anne Marie Murphy, PhD, the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force, issued the following statement:

"As an organization committed to saving women's lives by eliminating disparities in survival from breast cancer, we are disappointed that Governor Rauner has proposed very large funding cuts to the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, to Medicaid and the complete elimination of Illinois Medicaid's Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program. It's hard to imagine how one could possibly cut that much from these programs without seriously hurting a lot of Illinoisans."

The Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP) helps thousands of uninsured women get free mammograms and Pap tests and diagnostic follow up when necessary so that if a woman has either breast or cervical cancer, it can be detected at its earliest stage when it is most easily and effectively treated through Illinois Medicaid's Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program (Treatment Act). In short, these two programs keep women alive. According to the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, a partnering cancer organization, IBCCP detected 727 invasive breast cancers and 1,490 cervical cancers and precancerous lesions between 2007 and 2012.

The IBCCP has been underfunded for several years now. In fact, the Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force (the Task Force) established its program, Beyond October, to provide free mammograms to uninsured women in the fall of 2012 in response to underfunding. At the time, waitlists had grown long of women waiting or being turned away from screening mammograms. The Task Force succeeded in persuading area hospitals to donate free mammograms, navigating women to these mammograms and onward, when necessary, to diagnostic follow up often through IBCCP and the Treatment Act. Currently, the Task Force navigates approximately 1,500 women annually through this program. While this number is significant, it represents only a small percentage of all women who should be screened. At the height of its funding, IBCCP was still only providing mammography screens to 10% of eligible uninsured women.

Governor Rauner proposes cutting state funding for IBCCP from \$14 million to \$4 million, a 71% cut and he proposes completely eliminating the Treatment Act. The Illinois Department of Public Health estimates that the IBCCP cut will eliminate screens for 14,000 women.

According to Murphy, "A cut of this magnitude, cannot be absorbed by local charities. It is too great and in too short a time and is particularly challenging given that hospitals will already be faced with huge cuts in Medicaid funding. It is also very unfortunate given that we know these programs are working and are saving lives. This past October, the Task Force reported for the first time, a

decrease in breast cancer disparities for African American women here in Chicago. These proposed cuts will turn back the progress made to save lives and provide women of color an equal chance at survival."

"We understand Illinois continues to face tough financial choices, but cancer doesn't wait for a better budget and it doesn't stop growing until the next open enrollment period for the Affordable Care Act. Denying access to care for those with cancer will cost lives and this is unacceptable." Dr. Murphy continued to surmise that, "This unwise budget choice may also drive up costs as cancer care delayed often leads to later stage, more expensive treatments and care. We look forward to reviewing Governor Rauner's complete budget proposal and working with lawmakers to restore funding to these critical programs."

### **About the Task Force**

The Metropolitan Chicago Breast Cancer Task Force is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to save women's lives by eliminating health disparities in Illinois, through the lens of breast cancer. The Task Force addresses women's health holistically with the goal of eliminating inequities in prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship for all women. The Task Force acts as a catalyst to address this health injustice, leaving no stone unturned and working collaboratively to ensure that every woman has an equal chance at life when it comes to breast cancer.

In October 2014, the Task Force issued a new report entitled "Beyond October: How far have we come? Improving Quality and Access to Breast Health Services in Chicago" This report showed that for the first time, Chicago during the time period, 2008-2010 showed a decrease in the gap in survival between Black and White women. Whereas the gap stood at 62% leading up to 2007, it has decreased to 40% for the latest time period. The full report can be accessed at:

[http://www.chicagobreastcancer.org/site/files/904/93199/353837/718237/State\\_of\\_Breast\\_Cancer\\_Disparities\\_Report\\_Final\\_11.pdf](http://www.chicagobreastcancer.org/site/files/904/93199/353837/718237/State_of_Breast_Cancer_Disparities_Report_Final_11.pdf)

For more information, visit [www.chicagobreastcancer.org](http://www.chicagobreastcancer.org).

### **About ACS CAN**

ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit [www.acscan.org](http://www.acscan.org).

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