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Assembly California Legislature

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AB 1386: WOMEN'S HEALTH PILOT PROGRAM

IN BRIEF:

The purpose of this Act is to launch a breast and ovarian cancer screening and awareness pilot program to promote and encourage genetic testing and screening when indicated by the United States Preventive Services Task Force and CDC. Awareness of and ability to obtain recommended breast cancer genetic testing will increase the quality of life for hundreds of people in California by detecting and preventing death from late stage breast or ovarian cancer and lessening the physical, emotional, and financial burden that comes with a cancer diagnosis.

EXISTING LAW:

Existing law establishes the scope and function of the California Health and Human Services Agency, which includes departments charged with administering laws pertaining to public health and social services, among other things. Existing law also establishes the Inclusion of Women and Minorities in Clinical Research Act, which is designed to promote the inclusion of women and minority groups in clinical research.

THE ISSUE:

Women with newly diagnosed breast or ovarian cancer who are at high risk for having a BRCA mutation that raises cancer risk often don't get genetic testing, or even a chance to speak with a genetic counselor who'd help them weigh the necessity of such a test, a study published in the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) (2/7/2017) finds. Women in underserved communities of the state would benefit from advocacy on their behalf to address shortfalls in genetic testing for their new diagnosis of breast or ovarian cancer. According to JAMA, "Testing of 2 breast cancer associated genes, *BRCA1* and *BRCA2*, has been available for 20 years, but new massively parallel sequencing technology and less restrictive patent laws have made multiplex panel tests available at much lower costs. Yet little is known about recent patient experience with genetic testing and counseling".

But the study that surveyed newly diagnosed breast cancer patients found that while 80.9 percent of high-risk patients wanted testing, only 39.6 percent had had a counseling session, and 50.9 percent of these had a genetic test. The test results could help guide treatment, as well as future efforts to prevent more cancer by increasing patient knowledge of and access to breast and ovarian genetic testing in specified populations. The bill would require the board to report to the Legislature, as specified. This bill would make related findings.

THE SOLUTION:

AB 1386, until January 1, 2024, would establish the Breast and Ovarian Cancer Genomic Testing Screening and Awareness pilot program to promote and encourage screening through a public awareness campaign to help the State achieve an increase in screening rates in conjunction with the recommended indications. The pilot program will be a systems-approach to increase overall population-based awareness and screening to reach and screen populations at high risk for breast and ovarian genetic mutation cancer, especially those women in underserved communities, and those on Medi-Cal or who do not have medical insurance.

SUPPORT:

None at this time

OPPOSITION:

None at this time

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