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Women’s Health Care Advocates Speak out Against USPSTF for
Finalizing Guidelines Despite Legislation Imposing a Two-Year Moratorium on
Their Implementation

USPSTF action is certain to add to confusion over screening and apprehension about
access and affordability.

WASHINGTON - Today, a group of like-minded women’s health care organizations
expressed their disappointment with the United States Preventive Services Task Force
(USPSTF or Task Force) for finalizing its draft breast cancer screening recommendations
in spite of 2015 legislation mandating a moratorium on implementation. The Task Force
chose to publish its guidelines just weeks after Congress passed the legislation that would
prevent the recommendations from going into effect until Jan. 1, 2018, adding another
layer of confusion for women and physicians.

Congress did not intervene on the clinical issues, but they did mandate a two-year “time-
out” to seek clarity and allow for a more inclusive conversation about the value of breast
cancer screening and early detection. It is hard to understand the Task Force’s rush to
finalize when Congress and numerous patient and survivor organizations heard clearly
from women their desire to allow time to address the conflicting information.

Our organizations believe Congress’ intervention was critical since the USPSTF draft
guidelines were so different from all the other clinical organizations who advise on breast
screening guidelines. Of note, these organizations had invited representatives of the
USPSTF to participate in a consensus conference regarding the guidelines in two weeks’
time.

Without the new law, the final recommendations would have immediately restricted
access to mammograms for more than 22 million women between the ages of 40 and 49,
whose additional out of pocket costs for the exam would potentially make it unaffordable
to be screened. The group feels strongly that women and their families are hurt by
confusion and conflicting information about mammography based on numerous
guidelines and conflicting studies, and believe all women should be able to obtain an
annual mammogram beginning at age 40. We thank Congress for the two-year “time
out” and are now especially appreciative of their action.

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