

## Guaranteed Access to Quality Care for All

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### Background

Ensuring access to quality, evidence-based health care has been a top priority for the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) for many years and is an essential component of our mission to end breast cancer. NBCC's grassroots Board of Directors approved a *Framework for a Health Care System Guaranteeing Access to Quality Health Care for All* which built on NBCC's Principles for Quality Care. Using this framework, NBCC works to identify, advocate for, and support the implementation of laws such as the "*Affordable Care Act*" which marked important steps forward in access to quality health care. In addition, NBCC remains committed to protecting vital existing programs such as the Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Program (BCCPTP).

### History of NBCC's Efforts to Expand Access to Quality Care

NBCC has succeeded in making targeted changes to expand access to health care. After years of NBCC grassroots lobbying and influence, Congress enacted the "*Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act*" (P.L. 106-354) in 2000. The Act authorized enhanced matching funds to states to provide Medicaid coverage to uninsured or underinsured women and men diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer through a federal screening program. Prior to this Act, women and men could be denied treatment due to inability to pay, preexisting conditions or because they exceeded lifetime caps. Passage of this law expanded access to health care for thousands of underserved women and men. This is an opt-in program for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, five U.S. territories and 12 American Indian/Alaska Native tribal organizations.

In 2010, NBCC endorsed and advocated for the passage the "*Affordable Care Act*" (ACA). This landmark legislation marked important steps forward in providing access to quality health care for individuals with, and at risk of, breast cancer. NBCC continues to support the implementation and expansion of the Act. The ACA provides breast cancer survivors and others vital protections from many of the past practices of the health care system- including elimination of lifetime caps and restrictions for women and men with preexisting conditions. As a result of NBCC's advocacy, the ACA requires consumer representation on any committees, boards, panels or commissions formed under the law. In addition, insurance companies are required to cover the routine patient care costs for clinical trial participation and cannot discriminate against an individual based on participation in a clinical trial. The law brings the country closer to truly

comprehensive health care reform that will help the millions of individuals with, and at risk of, breast cancer.

### **Continuing to Move Forward Toward Guaranteed Access to Quality Care for All**

The BCCTP and the ACA, as well as other changes over the past years, have been important steps forward in getting us closer to the goal of guaranteed access to quality care for all. NBCC opposes and will work to defeat any and all efforts to repeal the ACA or replace it with something less expansive. In addition, NBCC remains committed to protecting vital existing programs such as the Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Program (BCCPTP) and critically examining any proposed changes to programs such as Medicaid and Medicare.

It is critical that even in the face of budget challenges we do not move backward in our progress. The impact of any changes to Medicaid, Medicare or other existing laws must be critically examined based on the affect these changes will have on overall access to quality care.

It is essential educated patient advocates play a role in these determinations which could directly impact their ability to access care.

### **Action Requested**

NBCC asks Senators and Representatives to support actions which will continue to move the country closer to guaranteed access to quality care for all. We ask that any proposed changes to existing programs be examined critically in order to determine their impact on this goal.