

**Washington D.C.** – Today, Congressman Kevin McCarthy led a bipartisan effort with his California colleagues in sending a letter to Governor Schwarzenegger asking him to restore access to the “Every Woman Counts” program to help prevent breast cancer. The letter spearheaded by McCarthy and Congresswoman Susan Davis asks the Governor to rescind a new California Department of Public Health (CDPH) policy that would reduce access to mammograms for low-income women through the “Every Woman Counts” program by increasing the eligibility age to 50 similar to a new controversial Federal recommendation. The Every Woman Counts program provided free breast screening and mammograms for low-income women 40 years and older.

Text of Letter:

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

We write to express our deep concern on the recent announcement by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to reduce access to mammograms for low-income women to the “Every Woman Counts” program, and we urge you to reconsider and rescind this policy.

The Every Woman Counts program provides free breast screenings and mammograms for low-income women who are 40 years or older. Since mammography screening became commonplace more than 20 years ago, there has been a 30% decrease in the breast cancer mortality rate. In addition, studies in Sweden show that regular mammography screening has reduced breast cancer deaths by 40% for women in the 40s. It is obvious that routine, annual screening of women starting when they are 40 years old has been demonstrated to save lives and increase breast cancer survival rates.

That said, we believe that raising the eligibility from 40 years old to 50 years old for low-income women to participate in the Every Woman Counts program not only runs contrary to the intent of the program but also would result in significantly reducing access to these vital, early detection procedures, ultimately placing more women at risk of dying from breast cancer. This is unacceptable.

As you know, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recently issued recommendations, which have also caused great concern, that women in their 40s generally do not need routine, annual mammography screenings. However, the recent action taken by CDPH is even more draconian than the Task Force's recommendations because it automatically excludes women in their 40s from the Every Woman Counts program. At least the Task Force recommendations say that women between 40 and 49 years old should still have mammograms, based on their health, family history, and other risk factors.

We would also note that in response to the Task Force's recommendations on this issue, leading cancer organizations, including the American Cancer Society, the Mayo Clinic, the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, and the National Breast Cancer Foundation are not changing their policies of recommending annual mammography screenings for women when they turn 40 years old.

While we understand the State of California is facing massive deficits and is seeking creative avenues to close these deficits, we do not believe that the CDPH's recommendations to reduce access for low-income women to mammograms is an appropriate action to take to resolve the State's fiscal woes. It is penny wise and pound foolish. We therefore respectfully request your reconsideration and rescinding of the recent CDPH policy so women in California can continue to receive life-saving mammograms through the Every Woman Counts program when they turn 40 years old.

California Member Signatories:

Congressman Kevin McCarthy (CA-22)  
Congresswoman Susan Davis (CA-53)  
Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (CA-6)  
Congresswoman Mary Bono Mack (CA-45)  
Congressman Joe Baca (CA-43)  
Congressman Brian P. Bilbray (CA-50)  
Congressman Bob Filner (CA-51)  
Congressman Ken Calvert (CA-44)  
Congresswoman Diane E. Watson (CA-33)  
Congressman Daniel E. Lungren (CA-3)  
Congressman Sam Farr (CA-17)  
Congressman Dennis Cardoza (CA-18)  
Congressman Gary Miller (CA-42)  
Congressman Devin Nunes (CA-21)

Congressman Buck McKeon (CA-25)  
Congressman Jerry Lewis (CA-41)  
Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47)  
Congressman Darrell Issa (CA-49)  
Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34)  
Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA-35)