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Chairman Talbot and Members of the Senate Insurance Committee:

I regret that I cannot appear before you in person to testify in support of **S.B. 494 authored by Senator Troy Carter**. I am a three-time cancer survivor and have a life-long immune deficiency due to certain chemotherapy treatments. I am also the founder of the not-for-profit organization, Breastoration, which has helped over three hundred women in Louisiana afford breast reconstruction following mastectomies.

For many years, I have worked with Sen. Carter, and former Representatives Stokes and Moreno to make sure that all stages of breast cancer surgery and breast reconstruction are covered by insurance. I thought we had it done until I recently received communications from breast cancer and reconstruction surgeons, Dr. Amy Rivere with Ochsner Baptist Medical Center and Dr. Jules Walters, who chairs the Louisiana Association of Plastic Surgeons.

Federal law and Louisiana law currently require insurance coverage for breast reconstruction on a breast on which a mastectomy has been performed and reconstruction on the non-affected (non-cancerous) breast to achieve symmetry. Many women, like myself, following my second breast cancer diagnosis, decide to have bilateral mastectomies and reconstruction of both breasts to reduce the chance of yet another recurrence.

SB 494 addresses a nonsensical interpretation of our current law by some insurance providers who agree they must cover the reconstruction of a breast which has been prophylactically removed, but NOT the actual prophylactic mastectomy.

Consider this situation: A woman is diagnosed with breast cancer in her left breast and decides, in consultation with her physician, to have both her left and right breasts removed by mastectomy and to have both breasts reconstructed. Some insurance companies will pay for the mastectomy on the left breast and the reconstruction of both breasts, but it will NOT pay for the mastectomy of the right breast. Without insurance coverage for the prophylactic mastectomy, many women cannot afford to pay for that mastectomy, thus foregoing reconstruction covered by law and living with non-symmetrical breasts for the rest of her life.

SB 494 closes this loophole in our current law. The definition of "breast reconstruction" is amended to include "contralateral prophylactic mastectomies". As I have often testified before, a woman fighting for her life following a breast cancer diagnosis should not be burdened with fighting with her insurance carrier.

I thank you, in advance, from the bottom of my heart for your favorable consideration of this important bill.

Kim Sport
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