

Cosponsor H.R. 549, the Metastatic Breast Cancer Access to Care Act

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to become a cosponsor of the bipartisan **Metastatic Breast Cancer Access to Care Act**, which garnered 240 cosponsors in the 117th Congress. This important legislation would waive all waiting periods for Medicare and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for eligible individuals suffering from metastatic breast cancer.

Metastatic breast cancer (MBC) is cancer that has spread from the breast to the bones, lungs, or other parts of the body. As you may know, 90% of breast cancer deaths are a result of metastatic disease and the average life expectancy of an individual with MBC is 3 years. While there are treatments that have extended the lives of individuals with MBC, there is no cure.

Under current law, if an individual is found to be disabled for the purposes of Medicare and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), they must wait 24 months to enroll in Medicare and wait 5 months to receive SSDI benefits. During this arbitrary waiting period, individuals with MBC face incredible hardships in supporting themselves and their families and receiving the appropriate medical care that they desperately need. Due to current law and average life expectancy, many individuals with MBC may never receive the benefits they are eligible to receive.

Our legislation would waive the 24-month waiting period for Medicare benefits and the 5-month waiting period for Social Security Disability Insurance for individuals with MBC who are determined to be eligible under the current programs. There are federal precedents for eliminating waiting periods for certain individuals who qualify for SSDI and Medicare benefits based on their disability. In 1978, Congress eliminated Medicare waiting periods for individuals with End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) receiving home dialysis treatments. In 2001, Congress added ALS as a qualifying condition for automatic Medicare coverage, eliminating the 24-month waiting period. In 2020, Congress eliminated the five-month waiting period for individuals with ALS who qualify for SSDI based on their disability.

While we must do more to encourage research into new treatments and cures, increase access to medical care, reduce health disparities, and raise awareness for patients with MBC, eliminating waiting periods for Medicare and Social Security Disability Insurance would be a meaningful step for women and their families.

Please join us in becoming a cosponsor to provide much needed relief for individuals with metastatic breast cancer and their families by emailing Nora.Blalock@mail.house.gov and Kevin.Gannon@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Andrew R. Garbarino
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress