



Roxanne Johnson
Director of Development & Marketing
Susan G. Komen® Colorado
(303) 744-2088 ext 304
rjohnson@komencolorado.org

Andrea Rader
Susan G. Komen®
972-855-4382
press@komen.org

SUSAN G. KOMEN COLORADO: 357,373 COLORADO WOMEN AGED 40-49 RISK LOSING AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO BREAST CANCER SCREENING

Komen Colorado Renews Concern over Task Force Proposal to Raise Routine Mammography Age

DALLAS AND DENVER – Jan. 11, 2016 – Susan G. Komen and its Denver-based affiliate, Susan G. Komen Colorado, say new screening recommendations issued today by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) could bar access to breast cancer screenings for 357,373 Colorado women aged 40-49. "I fully expect that we will start seeing more women with breast cancer that has progressed beyond the earliest, most treatable stages after these recommendations are implemented," said Dr. Lora Barke, Vice President of Mission Initiatives for Susan G. Komen Colorado and Medical Director of the Invision Sally Jobe Breast Network.

"Every day we diagnose breast cancer in a woman with absolutely **no** family history of the disease. Every week we diagnose breast cancer in a woman under 50," Barke continued.

The comments came in response to USPSTF recommendations, issued today, that would raise the recommended age for the start of routine mammograms from 40 to 50 for women of average risk. USPSTF issued similar recommendations in 2009.

"Komen Colorado already serves as a safety-net resource for Colorado women and families whose insurance carriers deny coverage for life-saving breast cancer care," Barke notes. "If insurance carriers drop coverage for mammography for women in their 40s, Komen Colorado would be hard-pressed to raise sufficient revenues each year to pay for women who could no longer afford the breast cancer screenings recommended by their physicians."

These latest recommendations would not be implemented immediately due to a two-year moratorium imposed by Congress in December. Colorado law currently requires some insurance plans sold in Colorado to cover annual mammography beginning at age 40. However, Dr. Judy Salerno, president and CEO of Dallas-based Susan G. Komen, said the national breast

cancer organization is concerned that the new USPSTF recommendations could effectively bar access to screenings for millions of women under 50 because public and commercial insurers often use USPSTF recommendations to decide whether they will pay for certain tests.

Salerno emphasized Komen's position that women and their doctors should be the final decision-makers when it comes to breast cancer screening -- and that screening tests, if recommended by a healthcare provider, should be covered by insurers and government regardless of a woman's age.

"A lack of coverage would be most harshly felt in high-risk and underserved populations," Salerno said, "African-American women, for example, are often diagnosed at younger ages with aggressive forms of breast cancer – and die of breast cancer at rates over 40 percent higher than white women. Screening at younger ages is a critical tool for these women."

"The medical field is moving toward determining individual needs for screening based on a woman's risk," Salerno said. "Rather than establishing higher age-based standards that create potential barriers to care, women should be able to make informed decisions about breast cancer screening, develop a schedule that is right for them with their healthcare provider, and be assured that the screenings they need will be paid for."

Salerno encouraged increased investment in research to develop better screening tools. Komen has funded more than \$33 million to find more precise early detection methods such as blood and tissue tests. "Until those are available, mammograms are the most widely available and cost effective test that we have, and women and their healthcare providers should have access to them," she said. Information about breast cancer [risk](#) is available on komen.org.

About Susan G. Komen® and Komen Colorado

Susan G. Komen is the world's largest breast cancer organization, funding more breast cancer research than any other nonprofit while providing real-time help to those facing the disease. Since its founding in 1982, Komen has funded more than \$889 million in research and provided \$1.95 billion in funding to screening, education, treatment and psychosocial support programs serving millions of people in more than 30 countries worldwide. Komen was founded by Nancy G. Brinker, who promised her sister, Susan G. Komen, that she would end the disease that claimed Suzy's life. Visit komen.org or call 1-877 GO KOMEN. Connect with us on social at ww5.komen.org/social.

Komen Colorado is working to better the lives of those facing breast cancer in our community. They join more than a million breast cancer survivors and activists around the globe as part of the world's largest and most progressive grassroots network fighting breast cancer. Through events like the Komen Race for the Cure®, Komen Colorado has invested \$41 million in community breast health programs in 22 Colorado counties (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Eagle, Garfield, Gilpin, Jefferson, Larimer, Logan, Morgan, Park, Phillips, Pitkin, Sedgwick, Summit, Washington, Weld, and Yuma). Seventy-five percent of net proceeds generated by the Affiliate stays in Colorado. The remaining funds support breast cancer research. For more information, call 303-744-2088 or visit www.komencolorado.org.

###