



Duckworth, Murkowski Re-introduce Bipartisan Bill to Expand Coverage for Breast Cancer Patients and Survivors

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) today re-introduced legislation to ensure breast cancer patients and survivors who have experienced a mastectomy are able to access custom breast prosthetics under Medicare. The *Breast Cancer Patient Equity Act of 2021* would provide coverage for custom fabricated breast prostheses—which, unlike other prosthetic devices, are not currently covered by Medicare—to the more than 100,000 women who undergo

mastectomies annually. Senators Duckworth and Murkowski were joined by U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) in introducing this legislation.

“We can do so much more to help survivors of breast cancer return to health and achieve the best quality of life,” Duckworth said. “This bipartisan legislation is an important step in continuing to expand healthcare coverage for women and achieving health equity for older women and women of color. I’ll keep working with Senator Murkowski to ensure survivors—and all women—have access to the healthcare they need.”

“In Alaska, we’ve seen a huge improvement of the survivor rate for those who have battled breast cancer. This is encouraging progress, but also means that more women are undergoing mastectomies, and, unfortunately, many reconstructive options are not currently covered by Medicare. We can and should do more to support breast cancer survivors,” said Murkowski. “After a woman overcomes what is, perhaps, the most challenging battle of her life—this bill will expand coverage to help with physical and emotional healing.”

Over 3.8 million women in the United States have a history of breast cancer, many of whom suffer from unreconstructed breast loss. In 2021, more than 281,000 women were diagnosed with invasive breast cancer, which can require surgical breast removal. Currently, Medicare covers off-the-shelf breast prosthetics and reconstructive surgery for breast cancer patients, but not custom breast prosthetics.

For most women, a flat-backed, off-the-shelf breast prosthesis will be suitable and fit well. However, after mastectomy surgery, not all women will have a flat chest wall to allow a good fit for off-the-shelf prosthesis, and it can be difficult for some women, particularly women of color, to find prostheses that match their skin tone. In recent years, there have been advancements in technology to create and fit custom breast prostheses. Custom prostheses are typically silicone products that are created from a unique mold designed to fit the chest like a puzzle piece. Through laser scans of the chest, which may have bumps, scarring or dips due to surgery, many women may find that custom breast prostheses are a better option.