



For Immediate Release

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**CITY COUNCIL SPEAKER QUINN, BOROUGH PRESIDENT STRINGER,
COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY AND COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS JOIN
HUNDREDS OF CANCER PATIENTS, DOCTORS AND COMMUNITY
HEALTH LEADERS AT RALLY TO STOP FEDERAL
CUTS TO CANCER IMAGING**

*Denounce the Up to 40% Cuts to CT, MRI, PET/CT and other Vital Cancer Detection
Services Proposed*

**Catastrophic Impact on Services, Including Significant Provider Closings and
Dramatically Longer Waits for Critical Cancer Screenings and Detection, including
Mammography, Expected**

(New York, NY) – The Emergency Coalition to Save Cancer Imaging today hosted New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, Council Member Elizabeth S. Crowley, Council Member Inez E. Dickens and hundreds of cancer patients, doctors, medical professionals and community health advocates as they rallied on the steps of City Hall. The group sought to raise awareness and call for a stop to proposed federal cuts to medical imaging, such as PET and CT Scans and MRIs, that threaten to further restrict the availability of mammograms across New York.

The proposed cuts, in addition to existing major cuts for imaging providers from the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, could threaten access to important radiology services—especially for women and the elderly—and exacerbate the already extremely long wait times for critical services, such as mammography.

“These cuts would have devastating impacts to local New York services including forcing the closing of local providers and dramatically increasing wait times for doctor visits and diagnoses,” said Dr. **Eric Schnipper**, co-founder and spokesman of the Coalition. “According to a recent Congressional study, wait times for mammography screenings in New York have increased 171% in the past decade. The proposed cuts will only worsen what is already an extremely unhealthy situation. These rate changes could not only cost the government and patients more money, it could cost lives.”

“Medical professionals clearly advise that early detection is crucial in the fight against breast cancer and other deadly diseases,” said City Council Speaker **Christine Quinn**. “It’s incredible to think that the federal government is considering cutting life saving technologies which have helped so many women and patients across New York City.



Medical imaging can be the difference between life and death and we cannot afford nor allow these cuts to come to fruition. Preventative health care should be a top priority, not cutting vital services.”

"The proposed federal cut to cancer screening services goes against what we know to be true about the cost of health care, both in lives and bottom lines,” said Manhattan Borough President **Scott Stringer**. “CT, MRIs and other screening procedures that will be impacted by this cut are exactly the strategies that are crucial to life-saving early detection medicine -- the same model that we know also drives down the cost of treatment. New York's women and elderly deserve better than an eight week wait-time for a diagnosis they could have been treating for months."

“We need to be expanding access to healthcare, not reducing it,” City Council Member **Elizabeth S. Crowley** said. “Medical imaging is at the forefront for early cancer diagnosis and treatment, and every day a patient has to wait for a screening the more at risk you are. Without regular access to early detection screenings, diseases and illnesses will go undetected for a longer time. This could result in more severe symptoms developing, leading to more costly hospitalizations and dramatically reduced chances of survival. We should be focused on extending access to these services not undercutting these vital programs.”

"I wholeheartedly support the efforts of the "Emergency Coalition to Save Cancer Imaging" to stop any further cuts to critical medical imaging services,” said New York City Council member **Inez E. Dickens**. “These cuts negatively impact on women and poor people. If women are denied the life saving benefits of early detection diagnosis, they leave behind their children. These cuts hurt the most vulnerable in our society. It is simply not right, not humane and as the late Senator Kennedy often echoed, *‘quality health care is a right for all not a privilege.’*”

As detailed in multiple recent Congressional reports (http://www.house.gov/list/press/ny09_weiner/07232007mammo.html and <http://weiner.house.gov/reports/2009MammogramReport.pdf>), many of New York’s medical imaging providers, in particular mammography, have had to close their services due to previous federal cuts and high costs. The proposed cuts are expected to force the closure of many additional providers throughout New York and the country and further limit access to these essential cancer detection services.

According to a 2007 Congressional study, New York City has lost 67 imaging clinics, or 26% of the facilities offering mammography screenings, since 1999. As a result, women must now wait on average more than five weeks for an appointment and in some cases must wait as long as six months. Brooklyn and the Bronx have an average wait time of 8 weeks, the longest of the five boroughs.



Since 1999, the City has experienced a 171% increase in wait time for mammography screenings over the last ten years. The currently proposed federal cuts would result in a further 40% percent reimbursement reduction for some imaging services, putting more providers at risk.

The Coalition is a nonprofit, grassroots organization that has no ties to industry or major corporations and whose members do not participate in the self-referral of exams. Since its formation in July, the Coalition has gathered over 25,000 petition signatures from downstate New Yorkers in support of protecting these vital cancer screening services.

About the Coalition:

The Emergency Coalition to Save Cancer Imaging (ECSCI) a grassroots, nonprofit organizations comprised of thousands of New Yorkers concerned about access to life-saving medical imaging. ECSCI is dedicated to preserving critical services such as mammography, CT and PET scans, MRI and other preventative and cancer-detecting services now being threatened by federal cuts.

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