

Submitted Testimony



**Testimony to the New York State Legislative Fiscal Committees
January 21, 2016**

On behalf of SHARE and the thousands of women and families we serve each year, thank you for providing us with the opportunity to comment on Governor Cuomo's \$91 million statewide plan to increase awareness and screening for breast and prostate cancer. We congratulate Governor Cuomo on his leadership in the area of cancer awareness and prevention, and we are deeply grateful for his commitment to this issue which affects millions of New Yorkers each year. For 40 years, SHARE has been committed to providing New York women and their loved ones with the education and support they need to face breast cancer, and we hope to work alongside both the Governor and legislature in the critical fight against this disease.

Mission and History

SHARE is a 40-year-old survivor-led organization based in New York City that provides support, information, and resources to women affected by breast or ovarian cancers. Its mission is to help women and their families address the emotional and practical issues that arise from a cancer diagnosis and to provide the support these women need to feel less isolated, better informed, and more empowered as health care consumers. More than 32,000 times each year, SHARE programs touch women and families affected by breast or ovarian cancer, as well as members of the general public, through support groups, helplines, education programs, and outreach initiatives.

Making targeted efforts to reach all women affected by breast or ovarian cancers, SHARE places a special emphasis on partnerships and programming for women from medically underserved communities. Through the Ambassador Program, SHARE expressly serves women of color, with a focus on low-income and immigrant women in all five boroughs of New York City.

The Ambassador Program: Goals and Methods

Outreach

SHARE's Ambassador Program is a grassroots effort intended to reach and empower medically underserved general populations in the African-American and Latino communities in the boroughs of New York City. This program educates and trains African-American and Latina women who are survivors of breast or ovarian cancers and their family members to serve as advocates in their own communities.

SHARE offers educational programs and trainings for the Ambassadors, which provides them with access to the latest information on screening, clinical trials, drug treatments, and support services. Through SHARE support groups and education programs in upper Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, as well as other community events, these Ambassadors inform

women and men in their communities of the resources available to patients with breast or ovarian cancers.

In 2015, 10 African-American and 12 Latina women served as SHARE Ambassadors. Through their collective efforts, they made a total of 280 presentations at health fairs, community, medical, and senior centers in their respective neighborhoods. In total, their efforts reached 13,384 individuals in their communities in 2015 – a record number for this initiative. SHARE maintains a database to track all aspects of the outreach and the participants of the program.

In these medically underserved areas, SHARE's Ambassadors were able to dispel myths, provide accurate information, distribute literature and offer SHARE's free peer-delivered services to those in need. In addition to educating the community, Ambassador work also has the benefit of empowering the women who are providing outreach. By telling their personal stories and receiving support and continuing education from SHARE staff, Ambassadors are not only able to educate people in their communities effectively, but become deeply invested in their own health and well-being.

Survivor Patient Navigation

Women facing breast cancer in the United States who do not speak English have very real concerns about communicating with their medical providers, understanding their diagnoses, and making informed decisions regarding cancer treatments. SHARE's Survivor Patient Navigator (SPN) program offers a solution. In partnership with Bellevue Hospital and St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital, SHARE provides SPN services to medically underserved women, assisting patients in overcoming barriers to treatment, particularly those of language and culture. In 2015, the total participation for this program was 1,098.

Survivor Patient Navigators ensure that women understand their diagnosis and treatment options in clear, comprehensible language. They provide emotional support, as only a breast cancer survivor can, as well as translation where needed. They provide practical information about insurance and other financial issues. Most importantly, they provide ongoing support through phone calls, and SHARE support groups, which are bi-lingual and located throughout Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens.

The following email came from the son of one the Bellevue patients with whom a SHARE SPN, Maria Estrella, worked last year. It shows the impact and importance of this unique program.

"My mother was recently diagnosed with Stage II B cancer as a patient at Bellevue Hospital. News of my mother's cancer, as you can imagine, had a tremendous impact on all of us including mom. Not knowing what to do or where to turn, Ms. Estrella entered my mother's life allowing her to have a more concrete sense of what her treatment would encompass, etc. My mother was incredibly fortunate and blessed to have been introduced to Ms. Estrella by her doctors and oncologist. At home, mom discussed how much she valued and appreciated Ms. Estrella's help and guidance.

Mom's attitude and prospects have brightened, in my opinion, as a result of the positive support and advice she has so lovingly received from Ms. Estrella. I think that it is important for you to know how wonderful Ms. Estrella is. I am sure that many other patients (and survivors), who have had the privilege of working with Ms. Estrella, would zealously concur with my laudatory remarks. In my humble

opinion, we need more professionals like Ms. Estrella in healthcare and in the realm of cancer care. Professionals like Ms. Estrella make the difference! I am confident that my mother will make a full recovery in the months to come as a result of the medical care offered by her oncologist in addition to Ms. Estrella's help. I thank you and thank Ms. Estrella for the incredible work."

Outreach to Immigrants

SHARE has always reached out to the many diverse Latina communities in New York City. In 2015, we increased our focus on immigrant communities through outreach at the Ecuadorean, Mexican, El Salvadoran, Honduran, Guatemalan and Peruvian consulates. Building on our success at these locations, we will further expand this effort in 2016 in order to reach more women in immigrant communities who may have limited or no access to medical care. Currently, LatinaSHARE is in discussions to begin programs at the Paraguayan, Dominican, Costa Rican, Venezuelan and Argentinean consulates. Through SHARE's initiatives, women from these communities will have information about signs, symptoms, screenings and treatments for breast cancer, as well as experienced advice on medical care and health insurance.

SHARE is deeply grateful for this opportunity to comment to the New York State Legislative fiscal Committee, and we are pleased that the Governor has shown a significant commitment to this critical area of healthcare for women and their families. We hope to have the opportunity to utilize our 40 years of experience working with women and their families, particularly in medically underserved communities, to continue to improve the health outcomes of the diverse women of New York State.

(Add contact information: Names & titles and contact info of SHARE representatives).