

New York poised to expand access to breast cancer screening

June 13 2016, by David Klepper

New York is poised to expand access to breast cancer screening under an agreement reached by top state lawmakers and Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who made combating the cancer a priority after the successful cancer treatment of his girlfriend, Food Network star Sandra Lee.

Under the deal, the state would order hospitals to expand hours when mammograms are offered and require insurance companies to eliminate deductibles and co-pays for the screening and some other diagnostic tests.

Lawmakers are expected to formally approve the proposal this week. Cuomo listed the item as one of his top priorities for the final days of the 2016 session, which is expected to end later this week.

"When Sandy was diagnosed with breast cancer, she was lucky to have caught it early," Cuomo said in a statement. "But not all women are that lucky, and many are not fortunate enough to have the flexibility in their schedule or the resources to fight this disease head on."

The bill requires some 210 hospitals to extend mammography hours by at least four hours each week. It also eliminates annual deductibles or co-payments for mammograms used to screen for cancer, as well as cost-sharing for diagnostic imaging such as ultrasounds and MRIs for women who need more than a standard mammogram.

Some 15,000 women across the state are diagnosed with breast cancer

every year, and 2,640 die from the disease.

Lee announced last year she is cancer free after a double mastectomy.

The measure is almost certain to pass easily because it has the support of Cuomo, Democratic Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and Republican Senate Leader John Flanagan.

"I am pleased that we have reached a three-way agreement to reaffirm the state's commitment to giving women the chance to live a long and healthy life," Flanagan said.

"I thank Governor Cuomo for shining a light on this issue," he said.

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