



UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY HON. ROSA DELAURO
SCREENING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CO-TESTING FOR CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION
CANNON 121
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Good morning, and thank you Andrea Roane for that introduction and for moderating our esteemed panel this morning. Your work at WUSA TV 9 has highlighted the importance of early detection for breast cancer and other women's health issues, and I am grateful for the awareness you have raised among your viewers.

I also want to recognize my colleague from Alabama, Martha Roby—I am glad to be fighting by your side in a bipartisan manner to promote co-testing for cervical cancer prevention. And of course, I want to thank the Prevent Cancer Foundation for organizing today's briefing, and for their advocacy for advancing our tools to detect, treat, and someday cure this disease.

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. In the United States, more than 12,000 women are diagnosed with new cases of cervical cancer each year—and unfortunately, about 4,000 do not survive. For the most part, we understand where cervical cancer comes from—the Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that approximately 90 percent of cervical cancers are caused by the Human Papillomavirus, or HPV.

Today, we have a vaccine available for children, teens, and young adults to protect against HPV, but it is critical for women to be screened as well, regardless of whether or not they have been vaccinated.

Screenings such as Pap Smears and HPV tests offer the best shot for early detection, which is critical for successful cancer treatment. In fact, when abnormal, pre-cancerous cells are found during screenings, they can be treated before they turn into cervical cancer.

We must do all we can to ensure that women are getting co-tested, with both the Pap and HPV tests. This combination is recommended by many leading institutions in the medical community, from the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists, the American Cancer Society, and Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health.

However, the new draft guidelines released by the US Preventative Services Task Force for Cervical Cancer Screening propose separating the Pap and HPV tests. This puts women at risk and could cause cervical-cancer cases to be missed due to women receiving only one type of screening. As we will hear from the medical professionals on our panel, co-testing is a critical tool in our arsenal, and as the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force finalizes their guidelines in the next few months, we should advocate for the inclusion of co-testing. Lives are on the line.

As a cancer survivor myself, I know the power of early detection. My own ovarian cancer was caught early—had it not been, I may not be standing here today.

We have made significant progress in cervical cancer detection in recent years. The cervical cancer death rate has declined by more than 50 percent in the last 30 years—and the effectiveness of screening with the Pap test is a large part of that progress. But we still have work to do—and the federal government has a critical role to play. The public policy we enact in Congress has the potential to save women's lives.

Chief among them, we need to robustly fund medical research at the CDC and NIH. When we fail to increase spending on medical research, we are missing opportunities to work toward cures for life-altering diseases affecting far too many people, including cervical cancer.

I am looking forward to hearing from our panelists, including Dr. Sherri Flynt Wallington, from the Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. She is an Assistant Professor of Oncology, and her research focuses on community-based approaches to eliminate health disparities among underserved populations.

We will also hear from Dr. Susan Pankratz, of the McCarrick Center Medical Clinic in Wheaton, Maryland. Dr. Pankratz has worked in urban community health for 25 years, and has done significant work over the last two decades with the immigrant population in Washington DC.

And last but not least, we will hear from Kara Million, a two time cervical cancer survivor. From League City, Texas. Kara, thank you for sharing your story. I am so glad you are here.

Again, I want to thank our panel for being here this morning, and for your dedication to eradicating this disease. You can be sure I will be fighting by your side. Thank you.