



Congressman Tim Bishop

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Bishop and Breast Cancer Activists Push for Federal Environmental Research to Fight Disease

In the wake of a report recently published by the New York State Department of Health that failed to link environmental conditions to high breast cancer rates in local communities, Congressman Tim Bishop and members of his Breast Cancer Advisory Board called on the U.S. House of Representatives to pass the "Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act" (H.R. 2231). The event was held at the Mt. Sinai home of Sarah Anker, a member of Bishop's Advisory Board and the President of the Community Health and Environmental Coalition.

"If we are going to make a serious commitment to preventing and curing breast cancer, we must pass this legislation," Bishop said. "Although over 300 of my colleagues in Congress claim to support this bill, there has not been a single hearing on it, and there does not appear to be a vote expected any time soon." Bishop delivered similar remarks during a statement on the House floor last month.

The bill would provide \$180 million to implement a national strategy to conduct multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional research on the environmental factors that may be related to high rates of breast cancer diagnoses in New York. For example, the New York State Cancer Registry reported a 51 percent above-expected incidence of breast cancer in Mt. Sinai, one of the communities included in the Department of Health's report.

"All too often we hear phrases like, 'no unusual environmental factors have been found,'" said Gail Frankel, a breast cancer survivor and member of Bishop's Advisory Board. "That is because the factors that cause breast cancer are far too usual. That is why we need this bill to pass."

While a limited amount of research currently focuses on the relationship between breast cancer and environmental factors, there are still many issues that must be resolved to make this research more effective. The causes of breast cancer are largely unknown. While less than 30 percent of breast cancers are explained by known risk factors, there is little consensus in the scientific community on how the environment impacts breast cancer.

"Determining what environmental factors cause breast cancer is not a Long Island issue, it is an issue that affects the health and safety of families nationwide," Bishop said. "I will fight very hard for this legislation."

Previous studies have explored the effect of isolated environmental factors such as diet, pesticides, and electromagnetic fields, but there is no conclusive evidence in most cases. There are many other factors that are suspected to play a role but have not been fully studied. These could provide valuable in understanding the causes of breast cancer and could lead to prevention strategies.

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