[Insert Date]

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you today to request your consideration of breast density notification practices for the Screening program of CancerCare Manitoba. CancerCare Manitoba states it is committed to early detection of breast cancer and yet breast density information, which can help with early detection, is not provided to the family doctor or patient. Following a mammogram, the agency withholds breast density information from women and doctors in Manitoba. Women need to be informed of their breast density because if they have dense breasts they face numerous risks. Breast density matters.

**Breast Density Risks**

1. Cancer is 4-6 times more likely in women with the densest breasts.

2. In women with dense breasts, mammograms are less accurate and will miss more than 50% of the cancers present because dense breast tissue shows up as white on a mammogram and so does cancer.

3. In women with dense breasts, often by the time cancers are discovered, they are later stage. Their survival is affected by a late or missed diagnosis due to dense breasts.

4. A large study has just been published and concluded that breast density is the most significant of all the common risk factors for the development of breast cancer.

**Density information is given to family doctors in other provinces**

Breast density information for all women is made available to doctors and women in other provinces but is withheld from doctors and women in Manitoba for women with 50-75% density. It is only provided to women with >75% dense tissue.

**Women with the highest level of density are recalled for annual mammograms in 5 other provinces**

Five other provinces have annual recall in place for women with the densest breasts. Although Manitoba is now informing these women with over 75% density, Manitoba does not have a recall protocol in place for these women, who face the highest risk of cancer. Other provinces have been following this protocol for 10+ years. Likely, this will contribute to reduced mortality.

**Accessing Density Information in Manitoba**

The reporting protocol does not allow ALL women to find out if they have dense breasts even if they fill out a Consent to Disclose Personal Health Information. Radiologists only tick off a box stating the density is under, equal or over 75%. This means that women under 75% density cannot know if they are in the 50-75% category. Dense breasts refer to 50% and above dense tissue. If a woman is deemed under 75%, she cannot know in what category she falls. It is not reasonable that ALL women in Manitoba cannot find out their density.

I believe that with density notification and informed discussions between women and their doctors, early detection can be a reality for women with dense breasts. **If women knew they had dense breasts, they could have the chance to protect themselves from harm by:**

* being vigilant practicing breast self-examination between screenings
* optimizing lifestyle risk factors (exercise, weight, alcohol use, etc.)
* understanding that a normal mammogram doesn’t mean cancer is not present
* seeking supplementary screening, such as ultrasound

I urge you to mandate density notification to family doctors and women. In this way, you can ensure the commitment of this province to finding breast cancer early and saving lives.

[Insert Name] [Postal code, city and province]