

Menendez Recognizes Cervical Health Awareness Month and Urges Women to Get Screened

January 5, 2012

WASHINGTON – In recognition of Cervical Health Awareness Month, Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) is reminding women about the importance of annual cervical cancer screenings. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 12,000 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer in the United States this year and more than 4,000 lives will be lost due to this disease, which is highly preventable through early detection and vaccination according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2012, an estimated 420 women in New Jersey will receive a positive cervical cancer diagnosis.

“The real tragedy of cervical cancer is that it’s preventable. We can quite literally save lives by increasing awareness, access to screenings and vaccinations,” said Menendez. “Cervical Cancer, like all cancer, knows no boundaries. Women of all ages, races and economic backgrounds are at risk for cervical cancer. Unfortunately, we know that sometimes access to health care and information does have socio-economic boundaries, and that is unacceptable. That’s why it’s so important that we do everything in our power to ensure women have the means to get screened annually, follow-up with their health care providers and stay educated.”

Thanks to health care reform, starting on August 1, 2012:

- Cervical cancer screenings, such as Pap smears, as well as the HPV vaccine, will be made available for no out-of-pocket cost. The human papillomavirus (HPV) is known to be the leading cause of cervical cancer.
- Women over 30 will be eligible for no-cost HPV DNA testing every 3 years.

Currently, HPV vaccines are generally covered by most insurance and managed care plans. However, receiving the vaccine is not mandatory in New Jersey. A federally-funded program called Vaccines for Children (VFC) provides physicians with free vaccines to administer to children who would otherwise go without due to an inability to pay. Children enrolled in Medicaid, Medicaid Managed Care, NJ Family Care, and those without any insurance, are eligible to receive free VFC provided vaccines. There are more than 2,000 doctors in New Jersey that participate in the VFC program.

Senator Menendez has long been an advocate for eradicating cancer and as such received the American Cancer Society’s National Distinguished Advocacy Award, the organization’s highest advocacy honor. He was a lead co-sponsor of Johanna’s Law, which created a national campaign to increase awareness of gynecologic cancers and he led efforts to secure funding for the program. He also co-sponsored Senator Barbara Mikulski’s National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program Reauthorization Act which offers screening services to low-income women without insurance and provides Pap tests and other screenings for qualified women ages 18 to 64.