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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2402

COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS
RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
COMMITTEE ON
RULES AND
ADMINISTRATION

November 1, 2010

Dr. Margaret A. Hamburg
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20857

Dear Dr. Hamburg:

My office has recently been made aware of the concerns surrounding the upcoming Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decision regarding the drug Avastin and its use as a treatment for metastatic breast cancer. In September, the FDA announced that it would continue its review of available Avastin safety data and make a decision regarding its continued use to treat cancer on December 17, 2010. This announcement has only served to exacerbate the anxiety felt among breast cancer patients and their families who fear that a decision to withdraw the drug's approval will severely limit treatment options for metastatic breast cancer, a disease that takes the lives of 40,000 women in the United States each year and for which there is no cure.

I have been contacted by women in Mississippi who can testify to the improvement in quality and length of life that they have experienced due to the use of Avastin. This drug has proven to be a viable treatment option for over 17,000 women, helping them manage their disease and live more productive lives. While I understand that patients respond differently to various medical treatments, I also believe that denying Avastin as a treatment option to women who already have limited options in the face of a terminal disease is inappropriate and unnecessary.

I understand that, even though the FDA Oncologic Drug Advisory Committee voted to remove the metastatic breast cancer indication from the Avastin label, the FDA does not have to follow its recommendation. In light of this, I ask that the FDA take into account the public outcry and personal stories of so many women and families who have spoken out about the benefits provided by Avastin as you make your final decision.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



THAD COCHRAN
United States Senator

TC/em