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By Joel Pett, Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader, Cartoonists and Writers Syndicate, for USA TODAY

Letters

'EARLY' word on breast cancer

When I first suspected I had breast cancer, my doctor told me I was too young to get the disease. I was just 32, and at first she denied my biopsy request. Months later, I insisted; the next day she called to tell me I had breast cancer. Had I not pushed, I might not be alive today. Approximately 11,000 women younger than 40 are diagnosed annually. Approximately 1,100 die because they were told, "You're too young" ("Breast cancer survivors can lift weights," *Life*, Aug. 13).

A small percentage of young women get breast cancer, but those who do have higher mortality rates. Our



futures grind to a halt. We have fertility, insurance and long-term medical issues. My experience propelled me to create the Tigerlily Foundation, which provides support and advocacy for young women with breast cancer.

Now Congress is considering more substantial help.

The Education and Awareness Requires Learning Young Act would help address younger women's needs and give them tools that could save their lives. The EARLY Act, authored by Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., also a breast cancer survivor, would fund a national breast cancer education campaign, educating

young women and physicians and offering support resources. Hopefully, all such efforts will help young women recognize the threat they face.

My 6-year-old daughter told someone, "Mommy and I are breast cancer survivors." Three years after my diagnosis, she is vocalizing what she went through. As I write this, I can reach over and touch my daughter's face — because I found my lump in time. Last week, she started first grade. I was waiting when she came home. I am still here, due to early detection.

Others worked to create awareness when there was none, giving women hope and a voice. We must carry their work forward.

Maimah Karmo
Aldie, Va.