

**BREAST  
CANCER  
ACTION**

# This is What **The Cancer Resistance** Looks Like



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
July 2017–June 2018

They are the only organization doing this critical work to educate, advocate, and address the epidemic from a **patient-first perspective** and **with a social justice lens**. For everyone like me, who is living with breast cancer, and for everyone who is at risk of the disease, Breast Cancer Action is our watchdog.

—ABIGAIL ARONS, BOARD MEMBER,  
MASSACHUSETTS



## Dear Friends and Supporters



At Breast Cancer Action we speak up and we speak out, even when it's unpopular. That's because this work is personal. And incredibly urgent.

We will not rest until lives and communities are no longer threatened by breast cancer. We will resist. We will persist. Because we are the Cancer Resistance.

Highlights from the 2017-18 fiscal year include: our successful work to resist the relentless attacks on healthcare; challenging the nominations of industry executives to key decision-making positions in our regulatory agencies; and helping mount a broad national campaign calling on California Governor Jerry Brown to put an end to fracking and dangerous drilling that harms frontline communities and threatens to increase breast cancer risk across the country. And, as always, we analyzed and reported on the latest breast cancer research and provided one-on-one information and resources, free of charge, to anyone who needs it.

Our work helps build a grassroots movement of breast cancer activists and this year we produced and distributed a free legislative toolkit for anyone to use when taking action and engaging elected officials about breast cancer related issues. This year, on the 25th anniversary of the first pink ribbon, we mobilized the breast cancer community through our annual Think Before You Pink campaign® to demand that The Estée Lauder Companies stop the betrayal and be honest about the harmful impact of their pink ribbon campaign.

Breast Cancer Action does the work that no other breast cancer organization is doing. And we couldn't do this work if we took money from the industries polluting our bodies with chemicals linked to breast cancer, or the pharmaceutical and biotech companies making the drugs to treat breast cancer, or the corporations slapping pink ribbons on their products, even when those products increase the risk of the disease. Thanks to your support, we don't ever have to choose between loyalty to our funders and taking a stand for women's health.

YOU make our work possible. Thank you for being part of the Cancer Resistance.

Karuna Jaggar, Executive Director

Karen Klein, Chair, Board of Directors





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and Twitter **@BCAction**

# Changing the National Conversation About Breast Cancer

**We provide an important independent, patient-centered voice and thought leadership in a broad range of media across the country.** This year we published op-eds and breaking news responses that spanned breast cancer screening, diagnosis and treatment, the root causes of breast cancer, and pink ribbon marketing and culture.

- **Our op-eds** were published in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Huffington Post*, *Common Dreams*, and *Cancer Health*, and covered a range of topics, from genetic testing to the impact of proposed legislation on the breast cancer community.
- Our work was **featured in the inaugural episode of Crooked Conversations**, a new podcast from the people behind the acclaimed Pod Save America podcast, which takes a deeper dive into topics. Be sure to listen to the episode with our Executive Director, Karuna Jaggar: "When Did Breast Cancer Awareness Become A Business?"
- Our analysis, expertise, and work was also covered by *NPR*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *USA Today*, *Medscape*, *Bustle*, *KALW's Your Call*, *KQED*, *OZY*, and *The Daily Beast*.

**Our blog separates media hype from real progress and provides balanced analysis of breast cancer screening, diagnostics, and treatment** for people who want to know what the headlines mean for them and others affected by breast cancer. This year's posts included analysis of new breast cancer treatments, including the FDA's approval of Neratinib and the expanded approval of Olaparib to treat HER2-negative metastatic breast cancer. We also wrote about what the TAILORx study really means for anyone living with and dying from breast cancer.

Our **active social media presence** continues to make waves and challenge the mainstream narratives about breast cancer, and our members actively share our work and actions with their friends, family, and followers. We ended the year with **24,831 Twitter followers** and **33,064 Facebook followers**.

VOICES | BY KARUNA JAGGAR

## Right to Try Is False Hope

Karuna Jaggar is executive director of Breast Cancer Action, a national education and activist organization that works to achieve health justice for women at risk of and living with breast cancer and advocates for systemic change to stop breast cancer before it starts.

**THERE IS NO RIGHT** way to deal with the devastating news that you've run out of treatment options as a dying or desperately ill patient.

On the surface, the debate over Right to Try legislation appears to be about whether seriously ill people, for whom no effective treatment remains, are allowed to access experimental drugs that have not been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Framing the issue as "right to try" tugs at the heartstrings and suggests that medicine's failures are not scientific but regulatory. But behind the appealing, how-could-anyone-not-support-it name, Right to Try is a libertarian effort by the Goldwater Institute and some Republicans to deregulate the drug market and weaken the FDA. It promises a quick fix for a problem that doesn't exist.

The implication is that the cure is out there but it's being kept from patients by government bureaucrats. In reality, medical advancement is painfully slow. But the FDA approves new treatments faster than any other developed country. For seriously ill patients, it already has a compassionate use program that offers a pathway to obtain experimental drugs. The FDA approves 99 percent of compassionate use requests,

usually within a few days—or just 24 hours in emergency situations.

It's almost always the drug companies, not the FDA, that don't grant access to experimental treatments. Drug companies may deny requests for access outside a clinical trial because there isn't enough of a limited-supply investigational drug or because they decide the benefits don't outweigh the risks.

Nothing about Right to Try legislation changes that. It may make companies more reluctant to provide experimental drugs without FDA oversight. And it could undermine the clinical trial model at a time when many trials are already struggling to enroll patients.

The heartbreaking truth is that even when patients get access to investigational treatments, they're still not necessarily lifesaving. Experimental drugs are just that: experimental. We don't yet know if they work or if they're safe. These regulatory efforts don't include protections against unscrupulous doctors or drug companies charging as much as they want for unproven therapies.



Karuna Jaggar

I just completed treatment for an exceedingly rare cancer. I understand as well as anyone the urgent need for more effective, less toxic treatments. I believe we should all demand more from the billions spent on medical research, as well as a health system that prioritizes patient well-being. But Right to Try legislation attacks the one agency tasked with ensuring the safety and efficacy of medications, and its promises are based on nothing more than false hope. Taking the FDA out of the picture is not the way to promote and protect public health—and it won't save lives. ■

COURTESY OF BREAST CANCER ACTION

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## San Francisco Chronicle





## Grassroots Tools & Education

**We provide free activist tools and hold on-the-ground community events across the country** because we know that it takes a movement to make change and that we're more powerful when we work together.

This year we launched a new toolkit. **Activism for All: Breast Cancer Action's Legislative Toolkit** provides step-by-step advice on how to get in front of public officials, representatives, and senators, and how to make your voice heard. From experienced lobbyists to first-time activists, the resource is for anyone who wants to influence policy and legislation on critical issues related to breast cancer.



**Our free, interactive, educational webinars** cover a range of topics and bring renowned experts, health professionals, activists, patients, and community members together. Our webinars continue to be well attended and well received. This year's webinars included:

- **Toxic's Still Not Tasty: Oil Wastewater and Your Food** featured acclaimed ecologist and anti-fracking activists Dr. Sandra Steingraber, and David Braun of Rootskeeper, who discussed oil wastewater production, the health risks—including links to breast cancer—associated with oil wastewater use in agriculture, and actions people could take to get involved.
- **Priced Out: The High Cost of Cancer Drugs** featured oncologist and critical health policy analyst Dr. Vinay Prasad, whose research looks at what factors into the cost of cancer treatment drugs, and how to make sure we're getting what we pay for.
- **Right to Try vs. False Hope** featured Dr. Alison Bateman-House, medical ethicist at NYU's School of Medicine, and Erica Lessem, MPH, Deputy Executive Director at the Treatment Action Group (TAG), on what Right to Try could mean for patient safety and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s authority to regulate drugs.
- **5 Years After the Supreme Court Decision to Overturn Gene Patents: Where do We Stand?** featured ACLU staff attorney Sandra Park, JD, a lead attorney in the case, and Tania Simoncelli, MS, formerly the ACLU's Science Advisor, who discussed the landmark case and the ongoing issues related to gene patents and genetic testing.



# Building a Grassroots Movement

**Our partnerships and coalitions help us build our movement for change** and allow us to do work that's bigger than any one organization can take on alone. That's why we actively participate in and collaborate with coalitions working on a broad range of issues, including: Americans Against Fracking, CA Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, Californians Against Fracking, Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, Protect California Food, Safer Chemicals Healthy Families, and the Patient, Consumer, and Public Health Coalition.

Some of our community events included:

- Our Executive Director, Karuna Jaggar, joined co-panelists talking about how to implement the successful strategies activists used in New York to secure a ban on fracking here in California as part of the **documentary film screenings of *Unfractured*** in San Francisco, CA.
- Long-time Community Leader for Change, Marie Garlock represented Breast Cancer Action at the **Treating Health Inequities with New Knowledge (THINK) conference** in Charlotte, NC, and the UNC Minority Health Conference in Raleigh, NC.







## Challenging Corporate Influence on Federal Agencies Tasked with Protecting Public Health



In the face of an even more pro-industry FDA and a weakened Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), **we mobilized thousands of people using our targeted advocacy tool that allows members to contact key decision makers by phone, email, and Twitter.**

We opposed nominees with deep industry ties and conflicts of interest, including:

- Big pharma executive **Alex Azar's nomination as Secretary of Health and Human Services.** At times there seemed to be hope Azar's nomination wouldn't be approved given the heavy questioning regarding his ties to the pharmaceutical industry and drug pricing. Unfortunately, he was confirmed by the Senate in late January, which makes our rapid-response watchdog role now even more essential.
- **Michael Dourson's nomination to the EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.** We mobilized our members to call the Senate committee members responsible for his confirmation. Because of our collective efforts, Dourson withdrew his nomination.

We also opposed the industry-friendly "Secret Science" rule that Scott Pruitt proposed before leaving the EPA, and mobilized our members to speak out in opposition to it. The rule, officially titled "**Strengthening Transparency in Regulatory Science,**" would radically limit the EPA's ability to use the best available science and public health research in their rule-making, effectively weakening public health and environmental protections.

Breast Cancer Action is the most trusted source for current information on breast cancer health. Their information is easy-to-follow, they are unabashed about their integrity to the public, and they stretch every dollar to the max. **No other organization working in this field can match them in impact.**

—HEIDI GIDER, WASHINGTON, DC



Breast Cancer Action was my first stop when I got diagnosed, because I knew the information would be **research-based and independent**. Thank goodness there's an organization that truly advocates for women with zero interference from corporate interests!

—LAURA SIDEMAN RISSMAN, CALIFORNIA





# Demanding Evidence-Based & Patient-Centered Healthcare

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We won't settle for anything less than **affordable, evidence-based, compassionate, culturally competent healthcare for everyone** that supports and values each patient's decision making about their body, free from corporate influence.

**We mobilized our members to successfully push back on ongoing attempts to repeal and roll back important protections of the Affordable Care Act.** We made sure Congress heard loud and clear that people living with and dying from breast cancer refuse to return to a time when they could be denied coverage based on pre-existing conditions, face lifetime payment caps, or be unable to access healthcare. Because of our hard work, the worst attacks on the ACA failed.

We continue to support the **Lymphedema Treatment Act**, which would remedy the fact that Medicare and many private insurers currently don't cover the cost of compression garments and other treatments for this debilitating condition.

We broke down what "**Right to Try**" legislation really means for patients and the Food & Drug Administration's oversight, and pushed back against the bill's catchy name and the enthusiastic support of the President. The federal bill expands on a number of recent state laws allowing patients to directly request access from companies to experimental drugs that have not been approved by the FDA. We spoke with Congressional staff, educated the public, and mobilized our members in opposition to the bill.

For the 18th consecutive year, we attended and reported on the **San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium (SABCS)**. We continue to be an **outspoken patient voice challenging the status quo** and pushing researchers and clinicians to do better for everyone at risk of and living with breast cancer. This year marked the 40th anniversary of SABCS. While symposium leaders used the occasion to call for celebration, we remain focused on the tens of thousands of women still dying from breast cancer each year, as well as the life-long physical, psychological, and financial impact on everyone who has been diagnosed.

Our **free Information and Resource Service** continues to be a one-of-a-kind resource for anyone diagnosed with breast cancer, their caregivers, and loved ones. And at a time when so many services are automated, and many organizations are ill-equipped to address the complexity of the hardest situations, people tell us they value our personal and prompt response of "a real person" at the other end of the phone who compassionately provides support and information.

This year, we served nearly 350 people from 27 states plus Australia, Canada, Germany, Pakistan, the Philippines, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Topics included firefighters facing increased risk of breast cancer, alternatives to mammogram screening, and benefit vs. risk of half-dosing tamoxifen. People continue to seek resources for younger women diagnosed with stage IV and triple negative breast cancer, breast reconstruction options, second opinions, and financial assistance for underinsured patients.



# Opposing Fracking, Dangerous Drilling, & Fossil Fuels that are Fueling Cancer

Our **leadership in opposing fracking and other forms of dangerous drilling** nationwide helps move the issue beyond climate change and the environment, and makes a strong public health case based on the **threats to human health and the links to breast cancer**.

As a founding member of the **Brown's Last Chance coalition**, we are helping lead a national campaign calling on California's Governor Jerry Brown to use his executive authority in his final months of office to ban new fossil fuel infrastructure, create a plan to phase out fossil fuels, and take immediate action to protect frontline communities. Millions of people are at risk of a range of health harms from these practices, including links to increased breast cancer risk. By calling for strong action to stem the supply of cancer-causing fossil fuels we have changed the conversation about what leadership looks like.

As the nation's most populous state, the world's 5th largest economy, and the 3rd largest oil-producing state in the U.S., bold action in California will protect millions of people from the health harms associated with fracking and dangerous drilling.



Building on our 2016 Think Before You Pink® campaign, "Toxic Isn't Tasty," we joined Food and Water Watch in collecting **petition signatures against The Wonderful Company** because of concerns about the use of oil wastewater to irrigate their fields.

Breast Cancer Action supported the **Oil Money Out** campaign that continues to **challenge the influence of oil money in politics**, and calls on California's legislators to stop taking oil money. We joined partners at Rootskeeper and other organizations in gathering more than 75,000 signatures that were delivered in Sacramento, resulting in several prominent politicians pledging not to take oil money, including Gavin Newsom.





## Challenging Pink Ribbon Culture & Marketing

**Our annual award-winning Think Before You Pink® campaign cuts through the noise** of pink ribbon culture to **tell the hard truths** about breast cancer and **challenges pinkwashing** and the hypocrisy embedded in the breast cancer industry.

Our 2017 Think Before You Pink® campaign, “**Knot Our Pink Ribbon**” targeted Estée Lauder, the global cosmetics giant that launched the first pink ribbons. With too little to show for 25 years of pink ribbon awareness and billions of dollars spent on pink ribbon products, more than 1,100 people joined us in sending letters to the CEO and the Executive Chairman of Estée Lauder demanding they stop the betrayal and be honest that:

- Empty awareness and publicity stunts are a distraction and cannot “create a breast cancer-free world;”
- No amount of positive thinking will prevent women from being diagnosed with or dying from breast cancer; and
- The chemicals in their products may increase the risk of breast cancer and might even interfere with treatment.

Our campaign reached more than 20,000 people on social media and members flooded Estée Lauder’s Breast Cancer Campaign Twitter feed with messages demanding they stop the betrayal and stop pinkwashing.

Estée Lauder removed the word awareness from their campaign name this year, which reflects the important culture change we’ve led. But our work isn’t done. We will continue to work to protect everyone from chemicals linked to increased breast cancer risk, as well as challenge the systems of oppression that blame and shame women.



I love giving to an organization that prioritizes women, social justice, and evidenced-based solutions to ending the public health crisis of breast cancer. I know of no other organization with the integrity and backbone of Breast Cancer Action.



# Thank you Donors & Supporters

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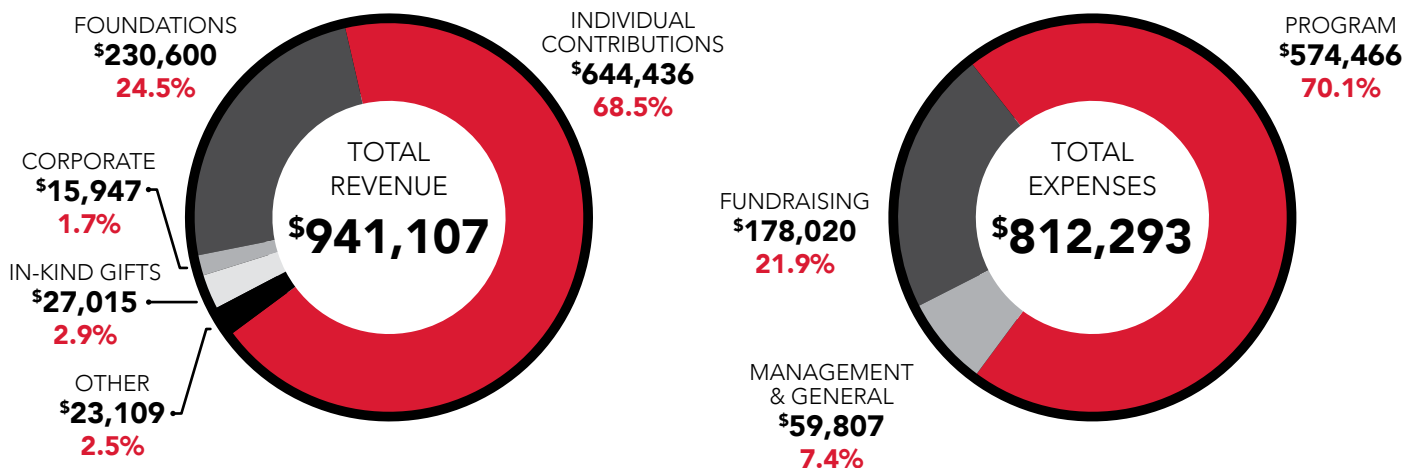
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INCREASE IN NET ASSETS: **\$128,814**

## Invest in Breast Cancer Action

We refuse corporate funding from any company that profits from or contributes to breast cancer. Your gift is essential to supporting our work to achieve health justice for all women at risk of and living with breast cancer. Thank you!

### MAKE A DONATION:

#### By phone:

Please call us at  
415-243-9301 or  
877-2STOPBC toll-free

#### By mail:

Breast Cancer Action  
275 Fifth Street, Suite 307  
San Francisco, CA 94103

#### Online:

Go to [bcaction.org/donate](https://bcaction.org/donate) to make a secure online donation.

### OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT OUR WORK

[bcaction.org/ways-to-give](https://bcaction.org/ways-to-give)

**Monthly Giving:** Join the Susan Stone Circle of monthly donors to sustain our work over the long haul.

**Planned Giving:** Invest in BCAction's activism by including us in your estate plans through the Elenore Pred Legacy Circle.

**Barbara Brenner Rapid Response Fund:** Support BCAction's ability to quickly respond to emerging issues in breast cancer.

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**Page:** Tell your friends and family "Don't Pink for Me" and ask them to make a donation to BCAction in your honor instead.

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Support BCAction's ability to advocate for systemic change.

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We moved this year!  
Make sure you have  
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## Get Involved with Breast Cancer Action

### TAKE ACTION

Breast Cancer Action works on a range of issues, including advocating for less toxic, more effective, more affordable treatments for women living with and dying from breast cancer; ending our exposures to toxic chemicals linked to breast cancer; and taking a stand against corporate pinkwashing. We work to see that every woman has access to evidence-based, affordable, culturally competent healthcare and we work to eliminate the social inequities in breast cancer outcomes. Our power is in our members. Take action at [bcaction.org](https://bcaction.org).

### GET UPDATES

Make sure you don't miss any of our action alerts on important campaigns to help address and end the breast cancer epidemic. Sign up for updates at [bcaction.org/signup](https://bcaction.org/signup).

### BECOME A COMMUNITY LEADER FOR CHANGE

Our members are our strength and we deeply value the involvement of grassroots activists throughout the country and around the world to further our mission. Learn more about our Community Leaders for Change program at [bcaction.org/communityleaders](https://bcaction.org/communityleaders).

### WEBINARS

We host free webinars featuring topic experts who offer independent, unbiased information on important breast cancer issues, including mammography screening, health inequities, and environmental links to breast cancer. Register for our free webinars at [bcaction.org/resources/webinars](https://bcaction.org/resources/webinars).

### FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Get your daily dose of truth-telling news and analysis about the latest issues in breast cancer. Follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/BCAction](https://facebook.com/BCAction) and Twitter at [twitter.com/bcaction](https://twitter.com/bcaction).

### MAKE A DONATION

Breast Cancer Action will never take corporate funding from any company that profits from or contributes to breast cancer. Your support makes our work possible and keeps us independent. Donate online at [bcaction.org/donate](https://bcaction.org/donate).

# BREAST CANCER ACTION

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**[bcaction.org](http://bcaction.org)**  
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Support our work at **[bcaction.org/donate](http://bcaction.org/donate)**

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