

# U.S. Legislation May Aid Densitas

by Peter Moreira | [0 Comments](#)

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A Halifax startup pioneering a device that measures breast density may find its market buttressed by a wave of legislation sweeping the United States.

Densitas is a seed-level company launched by [Dalhousie](#) Associate Professor Mohamed Abdoell and serial entrepreneur Tim Burke. It is now developing the Densitas automated breast density measurement system, which will generate real-time breast density measurements each time a woman receives a screening mammogram.

The system, which the team hopes will be on the market in two years, can help to determine the risk of breast cancer. Women with very dense breasts can be as much as six times more likely to contract breast cancer than those with fatty breasts. So, a timely, accurate reading of density can help women and their doctors determine risk levels and how regularly a woman should have follow-up screening mammograms or if she should be directed to diagnostic mammography.

“We’re trying to quantify a major risk factor which is now assessed on a qualitative basis,” said Burke, who is also the CEO of the smartphone application company Tether.

Abdoell explained that there are an estimated 32 million full-field digital mammography screens for breast cancer done each year in the U.S. alone, and the costs associated with a mammography screen have been estimated to be about \$100. New legislation in some states is forcing radiologists to provide women with their mammographic density measure with each screen.

Connecticut enacted such a law in 2009, and Texas did so earlier this year. The California legislature passed similar legislation recently, but the governor vetoed it. The [Oncology Report](#) reported last month that federal legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives and bills on breast density are slated to be introduced in at least six other states next year.

“It’s a big market and it’s shifting rapidly, partly because of government legislation,” said Abdoell.

Densitas can not only help to quantify breast density but can also save time (and therefore money) for radiologists who are now being mandated to produce breast density data with each screen. Given that the radiologist can perform as many as a couple of hundred screens per day, speeding up the process will allow them to perform more screens, meaning the device would quickly pay for itself. What’s more, the system will help to develop a data bank on breast density, which will help with research into breast cancer.

Densitas is an embedded software solution that would work with the digital x-ray machine. Abdoell and Burke estimate it would cost about \$1 million to commercialize the product. The company is a finalist for the Halifax region in [Innovacorp’s](#) I-3 competition. It received some money last year from the agency’s Early Stage Commercialization Fund and will seek another tranche.