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House State and Local Government Committee

House Bill 651-Sponsor Testimony

Tuesday June 19, 2018

Chairman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 651.

House Bill 651 will bring awareness to a deadly and aggressive form of cancer, known as sarcoma. Sarcoma is a rare cancer of the connective tissue and can occur anywhere in the body in either the soft tissue or the bone (osteosarcoma). According to the American Cancer Society, about 13,040 new soft tissue sarcomas will be diagnosed in 2018 and approximately 5,150 Americans are expected to die of this cancer. This bill will designate July as the Hank Kabel Sarcoma Awareness Month. This legislation is very important to me because I lost my dog Hank to sarcoma. Hank was diagnosed with an intrapelvic soft tissue sarcoma on February 1, 2013 after having problems going to the bathroom and not eating his treats. Hank fought his cancer for over 20 months with radiation, chemo and surgery (the same treatments that people get) until his cancer spread in November of 2014 and he passed of the disease.

After losing my Hank I decided that someone had to be the voice for dogs and people with sarcoma and I was going to be that person. I have traveled all over the world learning about canine cancer and sarcoma. I found out that dogs are 85% genetically like humans and by treating dogs with cancer, veterinarians gain important insights into improving treatments for humans as well. Also, clinical trials in dogs cost less money and give quicker results than those in humans.

In 2015 I started a 501c 3 called The Hank Kabel Sarcoma Foundation to raise money and awareness for canine cancer and sarcoma. Through research I found out that one in three dogs will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime and 50% will die of the disease. I learned that some breeds of dogs are more prone to cancer than others and there are common signs to look for in canine cancer and sarcoma. I also learned that dogs get sarcoma five times more than people with children being the second most common to be diagnosed with sarcoma.

When people hear of clinical trials in dogs they naturally assume that they are something harmful but by doing clinical trials in dogs our fur babies are given treatments to help give them a fighting chance against cancer as well. People also think scientists are giving dogs cancer but they get naturally occurring cancers just like humans and they are exposed to the same environmental conditions as humans. By finding a cure for our companions it will lead to a cure for children and adults as well.

The Hank Kabel Sarcoma Awareness Month will provide awareness to those not familiar with canine cancer or sarcoma and will help educate them about how dogs and people get the same kinds of cancers. If this month can bring awareness to the signs to look for in canine cancer and sarcoma and an early diagnosis can be made, then all our hard work and effort will pay off. Education is the key and knowledge is power.

Thank you once again, Chairman Anielski, and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present this issue to you today. I will be pleased to answer any questions that the committee may have.