



**Jeffrey A. Crossman**  
**State Representative**  
**15<sup>th</sup> House District**

Chairman Merrin, Vice-Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and all members of the Health Committee:

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 230 which seeks to designate May as Brain Cancer Awareness Month for the State of Ohio. Many of the national organizations that support brain cancer research and offer resources to families dealing with brain cancer have called for the adoption of this recognition month across the country, including the American Cancer Society, American Brain Tumor Association, American Association for Cancer Research and others.

I want to start with two brief personal anecdotes related to brain cancer to provide context and highlight why I think this bill is important: Our family's most recent experience with brain cancer began on July 4, 2016. As we had been doing every year for the past several years, my family and friends took our spot in the annual holiday parade to celebrate our country's independence day. During the parade, we recognized that my mother Rosemary, an otherwise healthy 65 year old woman, was having difficulty keeping a walking pace. We secured her a ride for the remainder of the parade and encouraged her to seek medical attention as a result of this episode in addition to her recent complaints of loss of balance, dizziness and what she had thought might be a "sinus infection." At that time, we did not recognize these as possible symptoms of a larger issue such as a brain tumor nor were we prepared to receive her brain cancer diagnosis.

After doctor visits that included MRI scans of her brain, the doctors confirmed the worst--- that she in fact had a brain tumor. Not just any brain tumor, but a malignant tumor of a particular malicious variety—glioblastoma multiform (stage IV). These types of tumors (gliomas) are notoriously aggressive and incredibly difficult to treat. In most cases, this type of brain cancer is quickly fatal and there is no cure that has yet been developed or even identified. According to information available from the National Brain Tumor Society, the 5 year survival rate of someone diagnosed with a glioblastoma type tumor is approximately 5%<sup>1</sup> and the average lifespan of a newly diagnosed brain cancer patient is about 14.5 months. Indeed my mother survived only 21 months, beyond her initial diagnoses.

Unfortunately, this is not our family's only experience with brain cancer. In 1986, my paternal grandfather, Robert Crossman, also received a brain cancer diagnosis and died later that

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://braintumor.org/brain-tumor-information/brain-tumor-facts/>

same year. It may be somewhat surprising that two sides of my family have had this same disease. However, what I was more surprised to learn is that in the intervening thirty year period between those two events, there has been relatively little progress in outcomes for brain cancer patients despite significant advances in medical care. Brain cancer remains one of the most difficult forms of cancer to detect early and to treat. In fact, one study noted that between 1998 and 2014, there were 78 investigational brain tumor drugs that entered the clinical trial evaluation process. 75 failed. That represents a 25:1 failure ratio in developing new brain tumor treatments over a two decade period.

Thus the prognosis for men, women, and children diagnosed with brain cancer remains grim; with mortality rates only incrementally improved, “despite major improvements in neuroimaging, neurosurgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy techniques.”<sup>2</sup>

In 2019, over 86,000 new patients will be diagnosed with brain tumors. Of that number, 26,170 (roughly 30%) will be malignant. In addition, 3,720 children will be diagnosed in 2019 with primary brain tumors (as opposed to metastatic tumors that originate elsewhere and spread). For children under 19, brain and other central nervous system cancers remain near the top of all pediatric cancers diagnosed exceeded only slightly by Leukemia.<sup>3</sup> However, brain cancer remains more deadly in children than Leukemia.<sup>4</sup>

While a bill that seeks to designate a given month as “Brain Cancer Awareness Month” may to some seem somewhat trivial, I assure you, it is not. Raising awareness in this manner can be and is significant. Raising awareness means educating people on symptoms that might lead to an earlier diagnosis and better outcomes. Raising awareness means informing people about the challenges and obstacles faced by the people and their loved ones dealing with brain cancer. Raising awareness signifies to the patients and their families that we stand with them and support them as they wage their fight against this terrible disease. Finally and equally important, raising awareness means promoting efforts to raise additional funding for more research into treatments that will lead to better outcomes and, dare we hope, a cure.

Members of the committee, I thank you for the time today to discuss this bill and I thank you for your consideration.

---

<sup>2</sup> Prognostic Factors for Long-Term Survival after Glioblastoma, Mohammad Sami Walid, MD, PhD, The Permanent Journal (2008).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-in-children/types-of-childhood-cancers.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db257.htm>. “During the 1999–2014 period, brain cancer replaced leukemia as the most common cancer causing death in children and adolescents aged 1–19 years.”

