



**Beth Liston MD, PhD**

**State Representative, District 21**

**Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 379**

**November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**House Health Committee**

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Manning and acting Ranking Member West, thank you for allowing me to speak today in support of HB 379, designating April 26 as Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) Awareness Day. Although this is a relatively simple measure, I believe it can save lives.

On April 26, 2017, 22 year old Antavia Worsham was found dead in her bed by her 17 year old brother. An empty insulin pen was at her side. Antavia died of diabetic ketoacidosis – a complication most commonly seen in young diabetics suffering from the autoimmune disease ‘Type 1’ diabetes. If your body doesn’t have enough insulin to make sure your cells can use the sugar or carbohydrates that you eat, cells start to break down other tissues. This leads to the accumulation of acid in your blood. If you have too much acid in your blood, you die.

Antavia was diagnosed as an adolescent and originally received insulin through the Bureau of Children with Medical Handicaps. However, when she turned 21 she aged out of this program. Despite working and attending college, Antavia could not afford to buy the amount of insulin her body needed. She began rationing her medicine. For Type 1 diabetics though, insulin is as important as air or water. Without enough of any of these things, she would suffer severe complications – and that is what happened.

Antavia is by no means alone. Diabetic Ketoacidosis is something I see most days when I am at the hospital. It is common, life-threatening, and in the majority of cases – it is preventable.

More than 1 million young people have Type 1 Diabetes and the incidence has been rising. Almost 10% of our population suffers from some form of diabetes – many of these individuals need insulin as well. Hospitalizations for DKA have been increasing, especially in young people – in 2014, 44 hospitalizations per every 1000 people with diabetes under 45 were primarily due to a DKA diagnosis. Doing the math, tens of thousands of hospitalizations per year result from inadequate insulin.

Unfortunately, the cost of this critical medicine that was discovered more than 100 years ago, has been skyrocketing – rising 700% since the 1990s. A recent study demonstrated that 1 in 4 people in Ohio ration their medication due to cost.

Designating April 26<sup>th</sup> as Diabetic Ketoacidosis Awareness day can help ensure people understand the impact of insulin rationing. Like many chronic illnesses, the day to day of living with the disease can sometimes hide the seriousness of the possible complications. This small step can help highlight the importance of managing diabetes appropriately – decreasing hospitalizations and saving lives. I urge your support for HB 379 and I welcome your questions.