

Testimony of
Doug Kelly, President and CEO of Make-A-Wish® Ohio
Presented to the
House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

April 10, 2019

Chairman Romanchuck, Ranking Member West, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. It is my pleasure to testify in support of an amendment to create a \$1 million matching grant for the Wishes for Sick Children fund in the State of Ohio's budget, HB 166.

Background on Make-A-Wish

Make-A-Wish is a non-profit organization that grants the wishes of children battling critical illnesses. These kids are battling cancer, heart problems, and a host of other tough challenges. They often live in a climate of “no” – no friends, no sports, no playing outside, etc. **But Make-A-Wish says “yes” to something they deeply want and that “yes” is very powerful.**

We are not a “last wish” organization – in fact, the vast majority of our children go on to lead long, meaningful lives.

Make-A-Wish Ohio is headquartered right here in Columbus. Key facts about our organization include:

- On average we grant 450 wishes each year to children in Ohio and have granted nearly 10,000 Ohio wishes since we were founded more than 35 years ago.
- Those wishes are granted by more than 1,600 community-based volunteers across Ohio.
- We grant wishes in all 88 of Ohio's counties and we have four regional offices across the state.

In your packet of information, you will find these facts along with county-specific information from each of your districts regarding the number and types of wishes we have granted over the last fifteen years.

The Lasting Power of a Wish and Its Impact on Healthcare Costs

A wish is an essential part of a child's treatment process – this is what families say and what doctors believe according to our national wish impact study:

- 96% of medical referral sources observe **increases in wish kids' emotional health**
- 74% of wish parents observed that **the wish marked a turning point** in their children's response to treatment
- 81% of parents observe an increased willingness by their wish kids to **comply with treatment protocols**

A New Transformational Study: Dr. Anup Patel Section Chief of Pediatric Neurology at Nationwide Children’s Hospital took the power of a wish one step further. He conducted a first-of-its-kind study that compared 496 kids at the hospital who received a wish in the last five years to a control group of 496 kids with a similar diagnosis who did not receive a wish

Some of the key findings included:

- Wish kids were **2.5 times** more likely to have a drop in unplanned hospital admissions in the year after a wish
- Wish kids were nearly **2 times** more likely to have fewer ER visits after their wish

Since nearly half of the children in the study utilized Medicaid, this research demonstrates the value and benefits of a wish not just for a wish child and their family, but also for the entire state.



In short what Dr. Patel found is reportable data to support the positive medical and financial return of a wish. His research demonstrates the healthcare value and cost benefits of a wish.

Closing Ohio’s Wish Gap

Last year, Make-A-Wish Ohio granted the wishes of 450 Ohio children with critical illnesses. But CDC disease data indicate that more than 1,000 Ohio kids each year are diagnosed with medical conditions that qualify for a wish.

That means we are only granting 45% of eligible wishes, leaving a “wish gap” of 555 Ohio children each year.

Eliminating the “wish gap” would require about \$4.4 million annually. That funding level would grant 555 more wishes (a 123% increase), allow Ohio to become the first state to exceed 1,000 wishes a year, and most importantly, it would help us fulfill our vision of granting every eligible wish in Ohio.

Annual matching funding of \$1,000,000 would be very meaningful, helping us to grant 135 more wishes (a 30% increase) across the state. This would allow us to meet 60% of Ohio’s need for children who qualify for a wish. By making this funding a matching grant that we have to earn to get, it will also help us leverage additional sources of private philanthropic funding.



The Importance of this Program

Why does this amendment matter so much? There are three primary reasons that combined have an impact on thousands of Ohioans.

First, the opportunity to reduce Medicaid spending and improve outcomes. Dr. Patel's study shows a wish to be a positive, innovative intervention that could potentially reduce state-supported healthcare costs as well as private insurance.

Second, a wish is powerful medicine. A wish's powerful effect on wish kids and their families. It is frequently cited by parents as a turning point in the child's fight, and it oftentimes changes health outcomes. That's why more and more doctors are recommending wishes as part of the treatment process.

Lastly, we are *always* in a race against time. We work with wish kids battling hundreds of types of critical illnesses, and while most of our wish kids do survive, we never know when one of them is going to run out of time. Right now, for every wish we grant, there's a kid waiting for a wish. *But wishes can't wait!*

Wishes transform not just the life of a wish child, but instead impacts thousands of lives in the local community and beyond. With this level of impact, imagine the power of granting **135 more** wishes each year in Ohio.

In a time when so much divides us, granting more wishes and transforming more lives is something everyone can agree is a priority.

Closing Remarks

This amendment to HB 166 is a smart piece of public policy with a modest price tag. It also would make Ohio the very first state to create such a program – and that is an opportunity we should embrace wholeheartedly.

By creating a matching grant program that will help us grant more wishes (and to directly transform more lives) this amendment will help foster healthier kids, stronger families, more united communities – all of which are critical public policy outcomes that we should insist on being first in.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to take any questions you might have.

I wish to go to Hawaii
Adrian, 9
blood disorder



HD-2 FACT SHEET

The Lasting Power of a Local Wish

Since 2004, Make-A-Wish® Ohio has granted **58** wishes for children battling critical illnesses in Richland County, including:

Year	First Name	City	Medical Condition	Child's Wish
2005	Kent	Shelby	metabolic disease	To have a therapy dog
2007	Gage	Mansfield	heart condition	To go on an Alaskan train ride
2008	Bryce	Mansfield	retinoblastoma	To have play equipment
2009	Mackenzie	Ontario	Hodgkin's lymphoma	To meet a celebrity
2009	Sam	Bellville	end stage renal disease	To go to Hawaii
2011	Daniela	Mansfield	acute lymphoblastic leukemia	To go to Florida theme parks
2013	Rantavia	Mansfield	kidney transplant	To have braces
2016	Jacob	Mansfield	medulloblastoma	To go on a shopping spree
2017	Megan	Shelby	cystic fibrosis	To go on a cruise
2018	Darlene	Shiloh	liver transplant	To have a sewing machine

A first-of-its-kind new study by Nationwide Children's Hospital links wishes to powerful medical and financial benefits. NCH's Dr. Anup Patel found children who were granted a Make-A-Wish wish saw a decrease in healthcare utilization. Since nearly half of the children in the study utilized Medicaid, this research demonstrates the value and benefits of a wish not just for a wish child and their family, but also for the entire state.



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KEY FINDINGS

2.5 times

Wish kids were 2.5 times more likely to have fewer unplanned hospital admissions in the year after a wish.

1.9 times

They were also nearly twice as likely to have fewer emergency room visits after their wish.

REDUCING OHIO'S "WISH GAP"

The Impact of Additional Funding

Wishes give Ohio kids something that medicine can't – **hope and courage**. As one parent told us, *"the doctor cured our son's cancer, but Make-A-Wish healed his soul."* In fact, 74% of parents say the wish marked the turning point in their child's fight against their illness. That's why more and more doctors are utilizing wishes as an essential part of the treatment process.

As doctors and families better understand the power of a wish, we've seen a sharp increase in the number of local children seeking wishes. This is creating a **"wish gap"** between the number of wishes needed (1,005 annually) and the number for which we have funding (450 wishes each year).

But wishes can't wait. These kids are fighting critical illnesses and are racing against time. Below are four funding scenarios that illustrate the impact additional funding would have on changing the lives of these Ohio children.



Eliminate the "Wish Gap"

\$4.4 Million

- Grants **555** more wishes (123% increase)
- Ohio becomes **1st state** to exceed 1,000 wishes granted
- Fulfills vision of granting every eligible wish in Ohio

Cut "Wish Gap" in Half

\$2.2 Million

- Grants **278** more wishes (62% increase)
- 728 total wishes **meet 72% of Ohio's need**
- Helps us leverage additional private & institutional funding

30% More Wishes

\$1.1 Million

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15% More Wishes

\$540,000

- Grants **68** more wishes (15% increase)
- 518 total wishes **meet 51% of Ohio's need**
- Jumpstarts additional scaling of wish granting efforts

I wish to go to Hawaii
Adrian, 9
blood disorder



HD-49 FACT SHEET

The Lasting Power of a Local Wish

Since 2004, Make-A-Wish® Ohio has granted **134** wishes for children battling critical illnesses in Stark County, including:

Year	First Name	City	Medical Condition	Child's Wish
2009	Kyle	Canal Fulton	acute myeloid leukemia	To go to the beach
2010	Jamie	Magnolia	vascular condition	To have a golf cart
2011	Craig	Alliance	chronic liver disease	To go to the Mall of America
2012	Jimmie	Canton	leukemia	To meet an NBA team
2013	Adeline	Hartville	rheumatologic disorder	To go to Alaska
2014	Chance	Navarre	neurological condition	To have an adaptive playset
2015	Brodey	Canton	cerebral vascular malformation	To have a camper
2016	Rodney	Beach City	kidney disease	To go to Wrestlemania
2017	Nicholas	North Canton	cystic fibrosis	To go to Hawaii
2018	Reighn	Massillon	lupus	To swim with dolphins

A first-of-its-kind new study by Nationwide Children's Hospital links wishes to powerful medical and financial benefits. NCH's Dr. Anup Patel found children who were granted a Make-A-Wish wish saw a decrease in healthcare utilization. Since nearly half of the children in the study utilized Medicaid, this research demonstrates the value and benefits of a wish not just for a wish child and their family, but also for the entire state.



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KEY FINDINGS

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Wish kids were 2.5 times more likely to have fewer unplanned hospital admissions in the year after a wish.

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They were also nearly twice as likely to have fewer emergency room visits after their wish.

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The Impact of Additional Funding

Wishes give Ohio kids something that medicine can't – **hope and courage**. As one parent told us, *"the doctor cured our son's cancer, but Make-A-Wish healed his soul."* In fact, 74% of parents say the wish marked the turning point in their child's fight against their illness. That's why more and more doctors are utilizing wishes as an essential part of the treatment process.

As doctors and families better understand the power of a wish, we've seen a sharp increase in the number of local children seeking wishes. This is creating a **"wish gap"** between the number of wishes needed (1,005 annually) and the number for which we have funding (450 wishes each year).

But wishes can't wait. These kids are fighting critical illnesses and are racing against time. Below are four funding scenarios that illustrate the impact additional funding would have on changing the lives of these Ohio children.



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I wish to go to Hawaii
Adrian, 9
blood disorder



HD-31 FACT SHEET

The Lasting Power of a Local Wish

Since 2004, Make-A-Wish® Ohio has granted **607** wishes for children battling critical illnesses in Hamilton County, including:

Year	First Name	City	Medical Condition	Child's Wish
2010	Angelica	Cincinnati	leukemia	To go to Walt Disney World® Resort
2011	Shane	Montgomery	autoimmune condition	To go to Zero-Gravity Experience
2012	Carter	Harrison	cystic fibrosis	To go to WrestleMania
2012	Rajah	Cincinnati	heart disease	To go to a the set of a TV show
2013	Scarlett	Cincinnati	spinal muscular atrophy	To have a backyard makeover
2014	Dumeral	Cincinnati	hematologic disorder	To have a room redecoration
2014	Owen	Cincinnati	hypoplastic left heart disorder	To meet a famous athlete
2016	Anna	Montgomery	Hodgkin's lymphoma	To go to the Cayman Islands
2017	Aaron	Cincinnati	cystic fibrosis	To have a fish tank
2018	Robert	Cincinnati	acute myeloid leukemia	To go to Hawaii

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Wish kids were 2.5 times more likely to have fewer unplanned hospital admissions in the year after a wish.

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They were also nearly twice as likely to have fewer emergency room visits after their wish.

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The Impact of Additional Funding

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As doctors and families better understand the power of a wish, we've seen a sharp increase in the number of local children seeking wishes. This is creating a "wish gap" between the number of wishes needed (1,005 annually) and the number for which we have funding (450 wishes each year).

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Adrian, 9
blood disorder



HD-62 FACT SHEET

The Lasting Power of a Local Wish

Since 2004, Make-A-Wish® Ohio has granted **133** wishes for children battling critical illnesses in Warren County, including:

Year	First Name	City	Medical Condition	Child's Wish
2008	Toby	Lebanon	Neuroblastoma	To have a go-kart
2009	Noah	Mason	heart condition	To meet a famous athlete
2010	Matthew	Mason	Hodgkin's lymphoma	To go to Arizona
2012	Killian	Lebanon	neurological condition	To be a model
2013	Bayleigh	South Lebanon	brain tumor	To go to the San Diego Zoo
2014	Samuel	Maineville	seizure disorder	To be a steam train driver
2015	Joseph	Waynesville	Hodgkin's lymphoma	To have a guitar
2016	Alyssa	Maineville	brain tumor	To go to Australia
2017	Landon	Springboro	metabolic disorder	To go to Walt Disney World® Resort
2018	Zane	Morrow	nervous system disorder	To have an elevated clubhouse

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Adrian, 9
blood disorder



HD-38 FACT SHEET

The Lasting Power of a Local Wish

Since 2004, Make-A-Wish® Ohio has granted **386** wishes for children battling critical illnesses in Summit and Stark Counties, including:

Year	First Name	City	Medical Condition	Child's Wish
2011	Molly	New Franklin	Hodgkin's lymphoma	To have a room redecoration
2012	Jennifer	Macedonia	idiopathic anaphylaxis	To have a puppy
2012	Jori	Massillon	gastroparesis, dysphagia	To have a therapeutic pool
2013	Makayla	Twinsburg	acute lymphoblastic leukemia	To go swim with dolphins
2013	Adeline	Hartville	rheumatologic disorder	To go to Alaska
2014	Chance	Navarre	neurological condition	To have an adaptive play set
2016	Rodney	Beach City	kidney disease	To go to Wrestlemania
2017	Leanora	Silver Lake	epilepsy	To meet the Pope
2017	Joseph	Massillon	muscle disease	To meet a celebrity
2019	Matthew	Stow	acute lymphoblastic leukemia	To go to the Superbowl

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