

Ohio House of Representatives

Government Accountability and Oversight Committee

Michael Suhy, Fire Chief – Village of Cuyahoga Heights, OH

Testimony on House Bill 776 (Anielski) Food Allergy Awareness

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on an important piece of legislation for Ohio's youth. House Bill 776 would incorporate training on understanding the severity of food allergies, recognizing the signs and symptoms of a food allergic reaction and understanding the proper protocols in case of an emergency anaphylactic reaction caused by food allergies into the existing in-service training requirements for a person who is employed by any school district or public institution of higher learning.

My name is Michael Suhy, father of Allison Rose Suhy. I'm here today, because I lost my daughter in November 2017 as a result of a severe food allergic reaction. While Allison was diagnosed with a nut allergy as a toddler and her food allergy was a part of our everyday lives, we always felt we were properly educated and understood how best to manage it. Allison had a few instances where she came in contact with nuts, and her body responded simply to a dose of Benadryl. She never experienced anaphylaxis, and when she went off to Ohio University, we felt secure that Allison was equipped with the information she needed to keep herself safe.

On November 3, 2017, I left Independence, Ohio for Dad's weekend at Ohio University with my little girl. We had the best time on both Friday and Saturday, where I got to meet all her new friends and see why she loved her new life in Athens. As I headed back to my hotel that Saturday night and said goodbye to Allison, I never would have imagined it would be the last time we would ever interact.

A couple of hours later I received the call that that every food allergy parent dreads. Allison, for the first time ever, developed an anaphylactic reaction and was being taken, by ambulance, to the nearest hospital. She immediately had to be airlifted to Riverside Hospital in Columbus, where, after days, the lack of oxygen she endured during anaphylaxis took her life.

As I drove home from Columbus, Ohio distraught and shocked after losing Allison, I vowed to find purpose in this tragedy and ensure Allison's life be honored and her legacy be inspirational.

Therefore, I am here today, because, as food allergy children evolve through their stages of life, especially following high school, their supporting communities change making food allergy education crucial. Severe food allergies continue to be misunderstood. If proper education is put in place from a young age, food allergy sufferers, their support systems, and the general population, will be properly informed and prepared to understand, recognize and effectively manage a severe food allergy and life threatening reaction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today as a proponent of House Bill 776, thank you to Rep. Anielski for sponsoring this legislation, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.