



American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Testimony

House Health Committee

February 28, 2018

HB 464 – Stroke Bill

Good morning, Chair Stephen Huffman, Vice-chair Theresa Gavarone and Ranking Minority Member Nickie Antonio and members of the House Health Committee. My name is Bill Forester, and I am a stroke survivor. My story begins on August 17, 2009 when I suffered a massive stroke. I was 51 years old, and I was standing in front of my bedroom dresser. The room began to spin and I did not know what was happening so I knocked everything off the top of my dresser to get my daughter's attention. I thought I was dying. I then somehow managed to block the doorway so my 11 year-old daughter would not find me dead.

In the hospital, I could hear the doctors talking about ending my life. I could hear them, but I could not say a word. I could not speak. I could not move. My family was in shock and tremendous pain. I could not comfort them.

To make a long story short, I could not speak for a year. A massive stroke had paralyzed the entire right side of my body. Prior to my stroke, I led a very healthy lifestyle. I was a vegetarian, I ran, and I never smoked. I was a public speaker.

Since that time on my years long journey to recovery, I have been participating in music therapy and I became an artist. My brain has now taken a turn in another direction with art. Please see the attached article from Emory University discussing how art saved my life. In addition, please see the Cleveland Plain Dealer article highlighting my life.

As a volunteer with the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, I am passionate about passing HB 464. Recognizing the three tiers of stroke facilities including comprehensive, primary and acute-stroke ready hospitals is vital. This legislation also requires all EMS authorities statewide to establish pre-hospital protocols related to the assessment, treatment and transport of stroke patients by licensed EMS providers.

Please keep my story in mind as you evaluate this bill on behalf of all stroke survivors. I am one of the lucky ones. I can share my story with you in person, but many others are not able to so I speak for them.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of stroke care in Ohio.

If you have any questions, I would be glad to answer them at this time.

Bill Forester



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