House Bill 344 – Proponent Testimony

Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee
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Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for having me here today to speak in support of House Bill 344, which would create a license plate for Cleveland Clinic Children’s. My name is Meghan Nowlin, and I am Director of Development for the Philanthropy Institute at Cleveland Clinic.

My role today as an advocate for this bill is unique. Not only do I work for Cleveland Clinic, I also have a powerful personal story of how Cleveland Clinic Children’s saved my daughter Maisie’s life when she was diagnosed with an extremely rare and severe disease.

Three days into kindergarten, my daughter Maisie began to develop bruises. It was the Sunday of Labor Day weekend and we asked our neighbor, who also happens to be a pediatrician, what she thought. She recommended that we bring Maisie into the hospital. With it being a holiday weekend, our pediatrician’s office was closed, so we opted for the emergency department. Within one hour of arriving at the ED, the doctors told us that Maisie would need to be taken in an ambulance to the main campus of Cleveland Clinic Children’s. She arrived at Cleveland Clinic Children’s and didn’t leave her first stay in the hospital for 1.5 months.

Four weeks after Maisie’s sixth birthday, she was diagnosed with severe aplastic anemia. The first line of treatment would have been a bone marrow transplant from a sibling. With four younger siblings at home, we were sure one would be a match. They weren’t.

Without a sibling match or a viable match in the world wide database, we proceeded with immunosuppressive therapy. After seven months of therapy, it was ruled a failure. A week later, a match came into the database from Germany and we geared up for transplant. In the spring of 2016, Maisie received her bone transplant from an anonymous donor. Her transplant was successful. After months in the hospital, she could go home.

As she continued to recover, Maisie was faced with obstacle after obstacle. Her complications were severe and life threatening. We tried seven different therapies to combat her complications with no success. At this point in her journey, we were in contact with 12 different institutions across the globe to help us come up with a plan to save her life. No one was offering the plan that Cleveland Clinic Children’s was offering. This plan was a medication called Nplate, and it saved Maisie’s life.

Today, after a two-year period where almost 80% of her life was spent in a hospital, Maisie is thriving in the fourth grade. She is at the top of her class and tests in the top 89% of all students nationwide. She skis, plays volleyball, basketball and lacrosse, and she is involved in theatre. She has a newfound love for the trumpet and is trying out for a travel volleyball team. She kayaks and swims in the lake. She’s as social as they come, and she is the light of our life.

We are confident that, had Maisie not been treated by the brightest minds in our country at Cleveland Clinic Children’s, she would not be with us today. It was the innovative care received at Cleveland Clinic Children’s that saved Maisie’s life, and continues to impact families who come to Cleveland Clinic Children’s.

Cleveland Clinic Children's is dedicated to medical, surgical and rehabilitative care of infants, children and adolescents. The staff uses the latest technology and most recent research to achieve the best possible outcomes. Children's has more than 300 pediatric specialists who are leaders in research for cardiac care, neurological conditions, digestive diseases and other conditions. More than 80 of our staff are annually named as "Best Doctors" by their peers.

With more than 40 community locations across Northeast Ohio and nearly 400 pediatric beds, Cleveland Clinic Children’s is nationally ranked as a leader in pediatric care by the 2019-2020 U.S. News & World Report “Best Children’s Hospitals” survey. In 2018, the caregivers at Cleveland Clinic Children’s saw more than 855,000 outpatient visits, 110,000 emergency department visits, 13,000 admissions, and 10,000 surgeries.

By supporting House Bill 344, you are supporting children like Maisie, and families like ours. The funds raised by this license plate will go toward research at Cleveland Clinic Children’s, and will help raise awareness of the organization.

Once again, Cleveland Clinic voices its support for the passage of HB 344, and is thankful to its sponsors, Representative Howse and Representative Patton. Thank you, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.