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Testimony of Dr. Anup Patel, Section Chief of Pediatric Neurology at Nationwide Children's Hospital Presented to the Senate Finance Committee June 13, 2019

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. It is my pleasure to testify in support of **H.B. 166**, the amendment to create a \$1 million matching grant for the *Children's Wish Program* in the State of Ohio's budget.

I am the Section Chief of Pediatric Neurology at Nationwide Children's Hospital as well as a member of the Medical Advisory Council for Make-A-Wish America. As a physician, I believe in the mission of this organization and have witnessed firsthand the life-changing impact Make-A-Wish wishes provide my patients and their families.

Anecdotally I could attest that wishes positively affected the patients we saw in the Complex Epilepsy Clinic. As a clinician, I sought evidence to support my hypothesis that these experiences provided children with critical illnesses more than hope – that in fact, they had a clinical benefit.

Cimone's Story

One of these patients is Cimone, a young lady who has treatment-resistant generalized epilepsy because of a genetic variation. She has seizures on a daily basis, well used to have seizures daily. They were impacting her life. She had difficulty learning and was having challenges with her medications. When you see children like this, they only have a one to three percent chance of ever becoming free of their seizures.

So, we recommended a Make-A-Wish wish as part of her treatment, something other than medicine that we could give. She decided her wish was to go to Paris, France, a dream of hers.

When she came back, she just seemed different to me. She was lighter, she was happier. She was more confident. Suddenly we started seeing her seizures getting better after she got back from her wish experience. Today more than a year later, she's still having fewer seizures than before. In fact, she has not had a big seizure in months!

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

Our study compared patients who received or did not receive a wish and associated impact on healthcare utilization and costs across two years. From 2011 to 2016, 496 Nationwide Children's Hospital patients received a wish. These were matched to the same number of a control group based on age, gender, disease category and disease complexity.

Whatever a child has wished for – a puppy, seeing snow for the first time, or to meet their favorite celebrity – our study demonstrated that Make-A-Wish wishes granted to pediatric patients can actually reduce health care utilization. In our study, we found that:

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

This led to a decline in cost of care even after accounting for the average cost of the wish. Since nearly half of the children in the study utilized Medicaid, the research demonstrates the value and benefits of a Make-A-Wish wish not just for a wish child and their family, but also for the entire state.

Closing Remarks

Wishes are an intervention and a smart investment in providing the best care possible to a child facing a critical illness. I've seen patients, and I've seen the data – Make-A-Wish provides a better quality of life, reduces a family's financial burden and truly transforms lives. Make-A-Wish wish kids are going to come back better after their wish. Their quality of life is going to be better. I'm confident of that.

We all need to be better stewards of our healthcare dollars. Whether you're someone supporting an organization like Make-A-Wish or you're a provider in the healthcare system that works with kids who have wishes. Regardless, we're all equally tasked with being good stewards of our healthcare system and dollars.

I urge you to support including the \$1M matching grant amendment to H.B. 166. This amendment will help Make-A-Wish Ohio grant 135 more life-changing wishes.

For the first time, this study lets us say that a Make-A-Wish wish is more than just a nice thing. As a doctor, I want to give my patients the best treatment available. And, I believe that wishes are powerful medicine. Something that potentially can help the health of a child get better over time, impact healthcare utilization and reduce dollars spent on healthcare.

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