Testimony of Nicholas D. Yeager MD, Pediatric Oncologist and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Nationwide Children’s Hospital and The Ohio State University College of Medicine

Before the Ohio Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee

Supporting SB 164 – October 9, 2019

Good afternoon Chair Schurig, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member O’Brien and members of the Ohio Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony before you today regarding Senate Bill 164 introduced by Senator Tim Schaffer. This bill would designate the month of July as Hank Kabel Sarcoma Awareness Month.

Sarcoma is an aggressive malignancy arising from connective tissues within the body found in adults, children, and animals (including canines). While sarcoma is relatively rare in adults (comprising about 1% of total cancer cases), bone and soft tissue sarcoma make up about 15% of the total cancer diagnoses seen in individuals less than 20 years of age. Unfortunately, survival rates for children with sarcoma have remained fairly stagnant compared to other pediatric cancers, particularly for those who present with metastatic disease (where tumor involvement has spread to other organs within the body away from the primary location) or those who develop recurrence. For these groups, 5-year survival is universally less than 20-25%. Thus, sarcoma makes up a disproportionately high percentage of cancer deaths in children despite its relatively low incidence. Additionally, treatment for these deadly diseases generally involves a combination of intensive chemotherapy regimens, aggressive surgical resection, and radiation therapy, the sum of which often puts them at risk for debilitating late effects as a result of their treatment. Complications such as late heart toxicity, secondary cancers, and difficulties with activities of daily living secondary to extensive tumor related surgery are common for survivors of sarcoma.

Despite the potential for long term morbidity and death that comes with a diagnosis of sarcoma, there have been few meaningful advancements in the treatment or outcomes for sarcoma patients since the addition of multi-agent chemotherapy regimens to local control with surgery or radiation. In fact, the base regimens used to treat most pediatric sarcomas have not changed significantly since I started my training in 1996. It is clear that significantly more research is necessary to truly make an impact on these deadly cancers. Ohio is blessed with outstanding adult and pediatric hospitals with active clinical and basic research programs in sarcoma, as well as an outstanding comparative oncology program through The Ohio State University Veterinary School. I believe that we have the resources and expertise in this state necessary to make a real impact in this disease.

Personally, I have lost over 60 patients to sarcoma since I joined the faculty at Nationwide Children’s Hospital. While that number is not high compared to other cancer types, because they occurred in children and teens the impact in terms of years and potential lost is immense. I can still see all of their faces, and recognizing July as Hank Kabel Sarcoma Awareness Month will honor their memory and raise awareness to help support further research. Thank you very much or considering this initiative.