

September 23, 2019

Dear Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 174. I am humbled and honored of the introduction by Senator Kunze to designate September 7 as Ohio Grateful Patient Day. It’s always a privilege for me to visit the great state of Ohio and meet so many wonderful people who share my passion for gratefulness.

My third season as a placekicker in the NFL was cut short after collapsing on a cross-country team flight while battling ulcerative colitis. Following two emergency surgeries within six days and after spending almost six weeks in the intensive care unit, I miraculously survived! And even more remarkably, returned to play seven more seasons with the San Diego Chargers, becoming the first NFL player ever to wear an ostomy appliance. After retiring from the NFL and getting married, I was shocked to discover that I had acquired the hepatitis C virus from the nearly 80 units of blood I received during my surgeries. With a wife and four children depending on me, I participated in three year-long clinical trials over an eight-year period and, in 2004, was deemed to have been cured.

I love referring to myself as “the most grateful patient” who is keenly aware that without the medical professionals, pharmaceutical and medical device companies, and my dedicated team of caregivers, I simply would not be alive today. Knowing there are millions of grateful patients like me who desire to thank the people who have given us our lives back, in 2016 we created the Grateful Patient Project and applied to the National Day Calendar to have September 7, the day I returned to play after my illness, designated National Grateful Patient Day. It’s a day where every patient, regardless of their background, can unite around a common cause of gratefulness and express their gratitude to all the people who have cared for us, often in the face of life-threatening medical challenges.

On behalf of all the grateful patients in Ohio and across the country, I want to thank you for your consideration of designating Sept. 7 as Ohio Grateful Patient Day. The idea of Ohio leading the way on this important initiative is exciting and truly heartwarming.

Best,



Rolf Benirschke

Founder, Grateful Patient Project