

Jeri Ward

HB 431- Proponent Testimony Stroke Registry

Senate Health Committee

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and other members of the Senate Health Committee; it is an honor to be in front of you today, seeing many familiar faces that I personally know that truly care about the wellbeing of Ohioans.

To the committee, you should know that the physicians said during my first of five brain surgeries that it was unlikely that I would survive, and if I did, I likely would not be able to speak, move, read, or write ever again. But here I am in front of you today, asking you to consider passing legislation that helps to keep people like myself alive every day; and house Bill 431 does just that.

At the age of 30, I suffered a massive ischemic stroke. I was trapped inside of my own body, and although cognizant, only able to move my eyes. As a Butler County social worker, I previously was the voice for so many who could not speak for themselves, but I soon became a person whose life was completely dependent upon others speaking and advocating for me.

While living in the ICU, I decided for myself that I would be able to communicate again; and once I could, I would continue being an advocate of a different kind. And although my voice now entails stuttering, slurring, and many forgotten words due to brain damage, I have proudly dedicated my life to stroke prevention, education, and legislation to save the lives of over 18,000 stroke patients a year in Ohio, where over 6,000 will die. It is known that someone has a stroke every 40 seconds, resulting in one death every four minutes. And currently, in the state of Ohio, we do not have specific legislation to support the life-saving stroke data collection is much needed.

House Bill 431's stroke registry will allow for this life-saving data to be kept, ensuring that stroke patients like myself have a true fighting chance against stroke. Requiring the Department of Health and designated hospitals through House Bill 431 to collect, compile, and oversee data related to stroke care and, as part of that process, to establish or utilize a stroke registry database will change the face of stroke in Ohio, and provide unlimited data to those physicians and practitioners or need it the most.

Senate Health Committee, it is my honor to be before you today, speaking for stroke patients who cannot speak for themselves. Please consider voting favorably on this life-saving piece of legislation which means the world me, and thousands of others who have been impacted deeply by stroke.