

Testimony for House Insurance Committee
HB 24 – Biomarker testing
3-29-2023

Good morning, my name is Buddy Busch. I'm here today in honor of my wife, Patti. Last year, Patti and I testified together in support of this bill in the House Health Committee. Sadly, my wife lost her battle to cancer last month.

Approximately six years ago, Patti had a recurring cough. She attributed it to being with our grandchildren who were in school and came to visit often. In July of 2016 she was putting our grandson down for a nap, patting his back and singing to him. She needed to cough so when turned away from him. When she coughed, she felt her rib break. She came downstairs and told me she thought she had broken her rib. I wanted her to go get her rib checked, but she told me that they wouldn't do anything for a broken rib.

The next day, our daughter and family were scheduled to fly home. She was so uncomfortable that she didn't go with them to the airport...very unlike her. I again encouraged her to go to urgent care. We went to the urgent care associated with our local hospital. The x-ray showed that she did have a broken rib but there was a much bigger problem - there was a large tumor in the right middle lobe of her lung.

Needless to say, we were stunned by this news. She had lived a healthy life, had never smoked or been around secondhand smoke. Our minds were swirling, unable to comprehend what we had just heard. They sent us to the local emergency room where they did a CT scan. The emergency doctor confirmed that there was a tumor, probably malignant, and made an appointment with a pulmonologist.

The pulmonologist was leaving for vacation in a few days but pulled together a team to do a biopsy which confirmed that she had non-small cell lung cancer. He told us that they could treat her there with surgery but that there were other specialty treatment centers that we could consider. I did some research and found that OSU has a highly rated lung cancer treatment and research.

We did not know if she would live to see our son's wedding or our grandson's graduation. The pulmonologist referred her to the surgical team at OSU. The tumor board determined that the tumor had metastasized to her chest wall. A biomarker test was done to determine if the lung cancer had genetic mutations. The biopsy results showed that the tumor had an EGFR mutation. She was referred to her medical oncologist who prescribed a targeted oral chemo pill, Tarceva, that works well with EGFR cancers. She took that pill once daily with very minimal side effects. She was on that treatment for nine months.

Another biomarker test was done and she began a clinical trial with a combination of Tagrisso and Navitoclax, also targeted once daily pills, that have minimal side effects. The biomarker testing has allowed me to live a very active life without the devastating effects of surgery or chemotherapy.

Patti's cancer diagnosis was stunning, to say the least. We were healthy, looking forward to retirement, travel, spending time with grandkids. All of these plans came to a halt that day, and our entire focus was on her cancer diagnosis and treatment options. As I researched the best places in the country to treat cancer, I did what any spouse would do, and what we are all told not to do. I looked up lung cancer on the internet and saw the devastating prognosis of past cases. Months...maybe a year. I didn't

understand the many different types of cancer that were being discovered, nor did I remember the many commercials advertising longer life living with cancer.

Patti started thinking about her future and wondering, will I be around for my son's wedding day? Will I live to see any of my grandchildren graduate from high school? Will I get to meet all of my grandchildren, or will some be born after I'm gone?

We are so thankful we found a treatment center so close to home! The James had the ability to perform biomarker testing that literally saved Patti's life. Had we not had that testing done, she would have endured surgeries that would have removed a lobe of her lungs, and limited her physical activities. She would have had to endure chemotherapy treatments that would have left her body weakened and susceptible to infection (think COVID). And because the treatments would not have been as effective, the cancer would have continued to invade other parts of her body, most likely her brain and liver, which I believe would have had a deadly result.

Instead, we continued living a full life. She was able to exercise multiple times a week. She worked in the yard doing normal things like mowing, spreading mulch, planting flowers. We went on long walks and hikes in the mountains of her home state of Washington. And she offered emotional support to other women with cancer, fighting their battles with cancer, some because they did not receive adequate testing and treatment.

But most importantly, she attended our son's wedding and danced a very tender mother/son dance with him. She was able travel to Seattle to see our first grandchild graduate from high school. Because her cancer treatment was informed by biomarker testing, we had 6.5 years of her life to spend together.

Thank you for listening to my testimony. I hope it moves you to include biomarker testing coverage by Medicaid and private insurance.

Buddy Busch
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