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Senate Bill 57
Senate Health Committee
Chairman Huffman
Sponsor Testimony – Senator Nickie J. Antonio and Senator Nathan H. Manning
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Thank you Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, and members of the Senate Health Committee for the opportunity to bring before you Senate Bill 57, which will designate the month of May as “Ohio Stroke Awareness Month.” This legislation will help educate Ohioans about the signals of an oncoming stroke, as well as helpful ways to prevent a future stroke.

Every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke. The proper treatment can mean the difference between life and death. Stroke is the 5th leading cause of death and a leading cause of disability in Ohio. Unfortunately, strokes are a health concern that can happen to anyone and have touched many, if not all, of our lives in some way. I am keenly aware as I am one of the thousands of Ohioans touched by a loved one affected by stroke. This year marks 23 years since my mother passed away from complications of a stroke at the age of 71. Since I have been in the legislature, we have worked to lessen such a crushing loss for other families through proactive policies. Ohio legislators have dedicated pro-active health policy work towards improving the outcomes for those who experience a stroke.

We have passed legislation to establish statewide guidelines for assessment, triage and transport of stroke patients to hospitals (HB21 134th GA), as well as House Bill 464 in the 132nd GA, which designated key hospitals based on the level of care for stroke victims. Our professionals are working to reduce those precious seconds to respond to a possible stroke. But we can do more.

It’s a common misconception that only older people or people with risk factors suffer strokes, such as those with a family history or history of tobacco use. However, Kodi Pride, an occupational therapist from Twinsburg, suffered one at the age of 41. The following is a summary of her story.

“On Friday, February 13, 2015, after days of experiencing a nagging headache, Kodi suffered indescribable pain. Focused on completing work and providing therapy for her patients at the critical care hospital where she worked, she took another Sudafed and a Motrin to complete her day and lessen her pain. However, nothing seemed to shake this headache -- which she believed was from her sinuses. Once the headache intensified, she decided to leave work early. Her coworker stated she sounded funny. She continued to inquire and then had her rehab manager, who is a speech therapist, assess her. They called the Director of Nursing and agreed she needed to go directly to an acute hospital because of her symptoms. Once she arrived at the hospital, she was immediately triaged and told she was having a stroke.

She was admitted to the hospital and family and friends were able to provide her information to the medical team. Kodi suffered a transient ischemic attack (TIA).

Seven years later, she testified that she has not had any neurological impairments or infarcts. She is grateful for her full recovery and recognizes the importance of knowing the signs and symptoms of stroke no matter one's age, gender, or demographics.

Designating Ohio Stroke Awareness Month and the ensuing activities around it will inform people that strokes, TIAs, hemorrhagic or ischemic, can happen to anyone at any time. Ms. Pride thought she was too young and too healthy -- but we know that is not the reality.

When someone is experiencing a stroke, every single second counts. Raising public awareness is crucial in educating people on symptoms of stroke that might lead to earlier detections and better health outcomes for patients, including the acronym FAST. It stands for:

F: Face - Do you notice one side of their face drooping? Ask them to smile.

A: Arms - Are they experiencing weakness in one arm? If they raise both arms, does one drift down?

S: Speech - Is speech slurred, unable to speak or hard to understand? Can they repeat a short sentence? Does what they are saying make sense?

T: Time to get help - If you notice any of these symptoms, call 911 to get the person to the hospital immediately.

National Stroke Awareness Month is observed in the United States annually during the month of May. This legislation will complement national efforts and help save lives across our state by promoting awareness of stroke symptoms and causes in the hopes that we may reduce the incidence of stroke across our state.

We respectfully ask for your support of Senate Bill 57. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, we would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.