

Senate Health Committee
Senate Bill 34-Sponsor Testimony
Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 34.

Senate Bill 34 will bring awareness to a deadly and aggressive form of cancer, known as sarcoma, by designating July as Sarcoma Awareness Month.

This Bill is very important to me because I lost my dog Hank to sarcoma. Hank was the best dog a girl could have, so I was devastated when he was diagnosed with an intrapelvic soft tissue sarcoma on February 1, 2013. I did everything to try to save my best friend. We did radiation, chemo and surgery (all the same treatments people do) and we traveled 20.5 hours to Colorado to the best sarcoma surgeon in the United States, but 20.5 months later Hank lost his brave battle to sarcoma on November 17, 2014.

After Hank passed away, I poured my grief into learning more about canine cancer and sarcoma. I found out that 1 in 3 dogs will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime and 50% will die from the disease. Sarcoma affects dogs more than any other species, with dogs being five times more likely than humans to be diagnosed with sarcoma.

Next, I had to learn about what sarcoma was so I traveled all over the United States and across the world. I found out that sarcoma is a rare cancer of the connective tissue and it arises from the soft tissue or the bones. The American Cancer Society shares that about 13,040 new soft tissue sarcomas are diagnosed annually in humans, with approximately 5,150 Americans expected to die of this cancer.

Through my research I was surprised that children are the second most affected by sarcoma. I have been a teacher for the last 29 years and kids are also very important to me. I learned that dogs have several cancers in common with kids including osteosarcoma, brain cancer, lymphoma, leukemia and melanoma. This hit too close to home for me (once again), when my nephew was diagnosed with leukemia in October of 2019 at his check up for his first birthday. Just like sarcoma, leukemia affects the most vulnerable. Luckily my nephew was able to do immunotherapy through a Car T-Cell Therapy infusion. Vets are also conducting immunotherapy on dogs with osteosarcoma through clinical trials at UC Davis. This kind of immunotherapy is inhaled through a mask and doctors hope that it will help humans with cancer in the future.

Studying dogs with cancer helps children with cancer. Childhood cancers are relatively rare and fundamentally different. As a result, childhood cancers are difficult to study and research is vastly underfunded. Studying dogs can help doctors learn more about shared cancers for the benefit of childhood cancer patients.

Kids and dogs develop cancers with the presence of a functioning immune system. A dog's size provides a better model for evaluating the dosing and effects of new cancer medicines in pediatric patients.

Dogs and humans both get naturally occurring cancers and they are both exposed to the same environmental risks associated with cancer. Dogs make good models because dogs and humans are 85% genetically alike and humans respond to cancer treatments similar to their companion counterparts. Finding a cure in our companions will ultimately lead to a cure for our children and adults with cancer.

Senate Bill 34 will spread awareness to those who are not familiar with sarcoma and it will share how this disease affects both dogs and humans alike. If I can bring awareness for an early diagnosis to save one dog, one child or one adult in the state of Ohio then this bill will have done its job.

Thank you once again, Chairman Huffman, and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present this issue to you today. I will be pleased to answer any questions that the committee may have.

Amy Carpenter, Ph.D.