

Senate Health Committee – S.B. 57- Proponent Testimony

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Thank you, Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, and members of the Senate Health Committee, for the opportunity to speak to you today about Senate Bill 57, which would designate the month of May as “Ohio Stroke Awareness Month”. Designating a stroke awareness month for the State of Ohio will allow us to shed light on the importance of knowing stroke signs and symptoms as well as how Ohioans can make efforts to prevent strokes.

Stroke is preventable and treatable and yet remains the fifth leading cause of death in the United States and in the State of Ohio. Minutes matter when it comes to treating a stroke and preventing death. This makes education about signs, symptoms, and prevention crucial, as it could truly save lives. Only 66% of those surveyed in the 2014 National Health Interview Survey were knowledgeable about all five stroke symptoms and the importance of calling 9-1-1 during a stroke. Awareness was lowest among Hispanics, blacks, and those living in the Western United States.

At the Brain Injury Association of Ohio, we serve individuals who have had a brain injury from any mechanism, very often including stroke. While many believe stroke to be an “older person’s” health concern we have many young people on our caseload who have suffered a stroke. In fact according to the Ohio Department of Health’s Coverdell Stroke Program Benchmark Report for 2019 the average age of adult stroke was 69.3. Patients aged 18 to 65 years accounted for 38% of the strokes reported by Ohio Coverdell hospitals.

Ohioans of all ages can benefit from an active awareness campaign focused on ensuring that the public is aware that stroke can happen at any time to anyone.

Increasing awareness of stroke warning signs can help ensure that individuals receive prompt lifesaving care. Knowing the stroke symptom acronym FAST- looking for Face Drooping, Arm Weakness, Speech Difficulty and with any of these symptoms it is Time to call 911 is truly lifesaving.

Increasing awareness of wellness activities that can actively reduce one’s risk of stroke including managing your blood pressure, stopping smoking, controlling your blood sugar, and maintaining a healthy diet can reduce overall incidence of stroke in Ohio.

Stroke Awareness month is recognized on the national level and aids in publicizing these important public health messages. We ask that you support this legislation to ensure that the strengths of this messaging can be leveraged at the state level and help improve outcomes with regards to stroke for Ohioans. We urge you to support Senate Bill 57 to help raise awareness of stroke’s impact on the state and to improve our health outcomes. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.