

10 May 2023

Jeri Ward

HB 33 - Proponent Testimony (Stroke Registry)

Senate Health Committee

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and other members of the Senate Health Committee; 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 retaining language from legislation (HB 22) that helps to keep people like me alive every day.

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 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 that once I was able to communicate again, I would continue being an advocate of a different kind. And although my voice would sound different, I would dedicate 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.

Codifying the current stroke registry will allow for this live-saving data to be kept, ensuring that stroke patients like me have a true fighting chance against stroke. Requiring the Department of Health and designated hospitals through House Bill 33 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.

Committee members, it is my honor to advocate on behalf of stroke patients who cannot speak for themselves. Please consider retaining the provisions from the life-saving piece of legislation which means the world me, and thousands of others who have been impacted deeply by stroke.