

Testimony for HB271 – The Breast Examination and Screening Transformation (BEST) Act

Shanise Pearce – Proponent

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Chair Lampton, Vice Chair Craig and members of the Insurance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB271. My name is Shanise Pearce and I'm a resident of Licking County. I am a wife of 23 years, a mother of three, a business owner, and most recently, a survivor of Triple Negative Breast Cancer. I come before you not only as a patient advocate, but as someone who knows firsthand what is at stake when early detection is delayed and what is possible when it is prioritized.

In 2020, I began experiencing unusually heavy menstrual cycles. What felt like an inconvenience turned out to be the beginning of a life-saving journey. I pursued genetic testing not because I had cancer, but because I believed in being proactive. That testing revealed that I carry both the BRCA2 and PMS2 mutations, putting me at high risk for several cancers. I began routine surveillance immediately.

In October 2023, despite a normal mammogram earlier that year, my breast MRI revealed Stage 1, Grade 3 Invasive Ductal Carcinoma. I had no lump, no symptoms, and no idea what was growing inside of me. But, because I had access to screening beyond standard protocols - an MRI that insurance rarely covers unless a diagnosis already exists - I caught it early. Two weeks later, I started chemotherapy. I had a double mastectomy in February. I am now in remission.

The BEST Act can make this kind of outcome more common, not just for women like me who advocate for themselves loudly, but for the countless others who never get that chance.

According to Susan G. Komen's 2025 fact sheet, over 11,800 people in Ohio will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, and more than 1,400 will die. Many of those lives could be saved with earlier detection.

Studies show that 1 in 5 patients avoid follow-up imaging if they have to pay a deductible, and 18 percent skip their initial mammogram altogether if they know they'll owe out-of-pocket costs. These costs are particularly burdensome for high-risk individuals like myself. The reality is that cancer doesn't wait. But our current system often makes people wait until it's too late.

Without this bill, we are asking people to qualify for help only after they've already been harmed. We are telling them to wait. To wait until it's big enough to feel, dangerous enough to spread, and advanced enough to justify coverage. And in that wait, many of them will lose their lives.

I created The Advocate's Table to make sure no one has to navigate this alone. But even with education, even with awareness, if screenings aren't covered, they aren't happening. Not in time.

And I stand here today also representing Susan G. Komen, an organization that continues to fight for earlier diagnoses, better outcomes, and life-saving policy change. Through that partnership, I have heard far too many stories from families devastated because insurance denied a test that could have made all the difference.

As an advocate for Susan G. Komen and through my work with The Advocate's Table, I hear these stories every day. I hear the quiet grief of women who say, "I knew something was wrong, but they told me to wait." I hear the heartbreak of daughters and sons who say, "If we had known sooner, we could've done something."

HB271 makes "doing something" possible. It is about preventative care. It is about access. And more than anything, it is about humanity.

If this bill does not pass, more people will die. And I say that not to shock you, but because it is the truth. Cancer thrives in silence. In delay. In access denied.

But with this bill, we tell patients they are seen. That their risk matters. That their life is worth protecting before a diagnosis.

Chairman Lampton, Vice Chair Craig and committee members, this is not just about policy. It is about people. About mothers who want to watch their children grow. About fathers who can't afford to take time off work for treatment that could have been prevented. About families who live with the pain of what if because someone told them to wait.

Please don't let another woman fall through the cracks simply because her cancer didn't show up on a mammogram. I am here today because I had access to an MRI. I am alive because someone paid attention before it was too late.

Chairman Lampton, members of this committee, I am a survivor because I had access to early detection. My hope is that others won't have to fight this hard just to be heard.

Please pass HB271. Because the cost of doing nothing is far too high.

Thank you.