

**Testimony of Ellie Hite**  
**Executive Director, AngelWorks Foundation**  
**Presented to the Senate Finance Committee on HB96**  
**Regarding Childhood Cancer Research Funding**  
**May 28, 2025**

Chairman Cirino, members of the Committee, my name is Ellie Hite and I'm the founder of the AngelWorks Foundation, a childhood cancer advocacy and support organization located in Lancaster. I am testifying in support of the \$10 million dollar childhood cancer research funding that Governor DeWine included in the Executive Budget in the Department of Children and Youth (ALI-830406). The House substitute bill cut the funding by \$5 million. Senator Schaffer & Senator Weinstein are submitting an amendment to restore this funding to \$10 million. I respectfully urge you to please support that amendment.

Invasive childhood cancer incidence rates in Ohio have increased by 35 percent from 2000 to 2019. This is a problem that needs attention now. Childhood cancer statistics are shocking, and most people are not aware of how badly better treatment options are needed.

To share just a few statistics with you:

1. Childhood Cancer is the #1 killer of children by disease, more than asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, congenital anomalies, and pediatric AIDS combined.
2. Most standard treatments for childhood cancers were approved over 30 years ago.
3. More than 95 percent of childhood cancer survivors experience significant health-related issues by the age of 45 caused by current treatment options.
4. One in six kids with cancer will die.
5. As of 2020, only six new FDA-approved drugs have been developed for pediatric cancers.
6. One in 273 girls and one in 255 boys in Ohio will be diagnosed by the time they are 20 years old.

This is a bipartisan issue in the purest form. Childhood cancer research is not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue – it's a human issue to help give Ohio's kids battling cancer a better chance at survival. Let's work together to allow our kids to grow up so they can determine which party they support.

Our kids deserve updated treatments and a better chance at survival without treatments that will likely cause a life-threatening health issue by the time they are in their forties if they survive.

This money will fund new and novel approaches to research within Ohio at our world class children's hospitals and universities. We have everything we need right here in Ohio to improve the care and treatment for our kids with cancer.

I know you probably think that childhood cancer is rare, but my foundation pays for up to three funerals a month for children who have passed from cancer. That is not rare and it's increasing at an alarming rate. Recently, within three days, we lost two amazing kiddos. Zayne Reis from Carroll, and Katelyn Weirich of Powell. Katelyn made a video for the House of Representatives that I sent to every member. It was our intent to let her make a video for all of you as well. However, like so many before her, her voice was silenced by cancer too soon. She was 10. (Zayne was 4)

I used to think that research funding for childhood cancers should be a federal issue, but relying on the federal government to solve children's cancer here in Ohio while our kids continue to battle is unrealistic. It is not happening quickly enough on the federal level, and we have everything we need right here in our state right now to advance care, leading edge research, clinical trials, and treatments right within our state's borders. It's Ohio's kids that are dying – shouldn't our state help them survive?

We have failed every child that has already died of cancer. We can do better, and being proactive to create a research fund that allows research for children's cancers is the way to do so. Our kids notice that they are not a priority. They recognize that adult cancers get great attention and that their cancers do not. (Have you ever seen gold ribbons in stores in September? -They haven't either.)

Please don't fail Ohio's kids battling cancer by not making them a priority.

If our state legislators won't help our children, who will? On behalf of all of the kids currently fighting, the ones who are in remission, the 552 new kids who will be diagnosed, and the ones that have passed, please restore the \$5 million to the childhood cancer research line item and support the research fund for the full \$10 million in the budget.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.