

I would like to thank the Chairman and Committee for allowing us to come and give testimony in support of Ohio recognizing Apraxia Awareness day, and for giving us a platform to share our stories concerning our children that deal with Apraxia. I would especially like to thank Representative Tim Brown for meeting with us and listening to our life experiences.

My name is Shad Ridenour and I am proud to live in the great State of Ohio, in rural Bowling Green.

My son Daniel was born on September 10, 2007, he was 8 weeks early and his birth weight was 2 pounds 13 ounces. That in itself is enough to make any parent worry, but because of my wife Celeste's background and education in early childhood development we developed a plan to insure our son received the additional medical attention that he would need.

Daniel's vocabulary at the age of three was less than 20 words, and we immediately enrolled him in once a week speech therapy at Wood County Hospital. A hospital that has an extensive therapy department for children with developmental delays. As any parent can appreciate, seeing your child struggle to do what other children do so effortlessly is truly heart wrenching. But because of his intense therapy and our never ending support and encouragement, Daniel was released from speech therapy after 3 and half years. While Daniel still struggles with side effects of Apraxia, his future is unlimited. He is the youngest child in his 2nd grade class but is near the top academically. He still is on a restricted diet and some of his issues will follow him the rest of his life.

We are often asked, what is Children's Apraxia of Speech? In simple terms it is a neurological breakdown between the brain, lips, and tongue. Children know what they want to say but have a difficult time saying the words. Along with speech delay other side effects of Apraxia are extreme sensory issues, ADHD, food allergies, and loss of confidence in their ability to communicate.

About the time we started therapy, Celeste and I helped found a group called NWO Apraxia Support. We at NWO are committed to helping kids with Apraxia and their families deal with this neurological delay. Because of the never ending support of our volunteers and corporate partners, in 4 short years we have awarded nearly \$80,000 in grants to help children with Apraxia.

The costs of having a child with Apraxia are staggering. A 45 minute speech therapy session can cost upwards of \$250.00 per visit. A major issue facing parents is the fact that many insurance companies only cover a limited amount of sessions per year, a number that is far too low, to receive the maximum amount of success for a child. And that is assuming that insurance companies even offer to cover therapy visits at all.

Another major issue facing parents is getting the school system to honor and fulfill the procedures outlined in a child's IEP evaluation. Many times schools will claim that the availability is limited or in some cases not existant when it comes to therapists seeing children during the school day. This in my opinion, is simply not acceptable, and is hurting the child's development and ability to learn. If children fall behind in academics early in life, will they ever catch up? Also, if children receive speech therapy outside of the school, even when prescribed by a doctor, they are counted as absent from their school and receive notices that they are in violation of Ohio's public school attendance policy. The health and development of my child is more important to me than if he misses 2 hours a week to see a therapist that is helping him achieve his goals.

I sit here today to thank you for bringing awareness to Apraxia. In that regard, I stress to you that in my and others' opinion, we could go to any elementary classroom in this great state and find an undiagnosed child with Apraxia. Often we hear, "oh little Johnny is just a late talker", while that possibly could be the case research has found that it is not accurate. Apraxia must be diagnosed early and the proper medical attention must be found as soon as possible to achieve maximum results.

In closing, I again want to thank the Chair and committee members for taking time out of your busy schedules to learn more about Apraxia and raise awareness of this medical diagnosis. With your help we can help more kids and their families that are living with Apraxia. My son Daniel is my best friend, I don't want to imagine where our lives would be if it wasn't for the early detection of Apraxia and the medical attention he received. Please help us educate parents, teachers, and our community about what is available for children with Apraxia. If you ask Daniel what he wants to be when he grows up he will tell you that he wants to play hockey for the Columbus Blue Jackets, something that would make his mother and I very happy, but he will also say he would like to be a police officer so he can help people. Well Daniel, daddy is here today trying to be like you and help as many people as possible. Again, I thank you for your time.