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Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
Proponent Testimony
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Testimony in Support of Ohio Bill No. 252 to Designate January as “Blood Donor Awareness Month”

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of January “Blood Donor Awareness Month” in Ohio.

I have been a blood donor for many years. I made my 136th lifetime donation last month.

I am from Botkins. We are a small town, but the community is very supportive of blood donations. The same is true of our county. Shelby County is part of Community Blood Center’s 15-county region. We rank 9th in population, but we rank third in the number of registered donors. CBC says in Shelby County one out of four people eligible to donate are blood donors

My daughter Chelsea wanted to be a blood donor, but never had the chance. She graduated from Botkins High School in 2006. She fought a long, hard battle with pancreatic islet cell cancer. She had blood transfusions during her treatment. Her hope was that someday she would be healthy enough to donate blood, rather than be the recipient. She was just 22 when she passed away in 2010.

In July of 2016 I organized the first Chelsea Lukey Memorial Blood Drive at the Palazzo in Botkins. It was supported by 76 donors. My son Nathan made his first lifetime donation in memory of his sister. We had 34 new donors. There were friends who came who before had never been donors. They’re healthy. You don’t realize your health is a great gift.

I’m passionate about being a blood donor, and the blood drive was the obvious thing to do in Chelsea’s honor. That was something that made her proud of me. She wanted to be a blood donor, but was too sick. I believe that people are willing to donate, if someone will just ask.

I wanted the blood drive to become an annual event. Community Blood Center asked me if I would consider holding the next blood drive just six months later, on Jan. 3 because the blood supply can get dangerously low during the holidays.

We moved the blood drive to Immaculate Conception Catholic Church. Our support increased to 91 donors and 76 donations for 115 percent of the collection goal. I contacted the CCD, the Catholic education program at the church and we got a lot of support from high school students.

My donation last month was a little embarrassing because there was a photographer there to take my picture. Community Blood Center had nominated me to be inducted into a national "Donation Hall of Fame" because of the success of the Chelsea Lukey Memorial Blood Drive.

I was surprised and honored. They induct 12 donors from across the country and our pictures go into the Hall of Fame 2018 calendar.

My picture is for the month of January, because the third annual Chelsea Lukey Memorial Blood Drive will be the day after New Year's. With your support, the blood drive in Chelsea's honor could be the first blood drive of January Blood Donor Awareness Month.

Kathy Pleiman from Community Blood Center is in the photo with me, and next to me is a picture of Chelsea. Being a donor made her proud of me. I like to think this would make her proud as well.

Thank you for your time. I would be glad to answer any questions.