

Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on an important piece of legislation. The “Allison Rose Act,” also known as House Bill 231, encourages school districts, community, and STEM schools to create food allergy training for staff members and students. In addition, it helps individuals identify and respond to someone experiencing an allergic reaction. This education would incorporate training on understanding the severity of food allergies, recognizing the signs and symptoms of a food allergic reaction, and understanding the proper protocols in case of an emergency anaphylactic reaction. The bill also requires the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to compile an annual list of organizations who offer free epinephrine auto-injectors to qualifying school districts.

My name is Michael Suhy, father of Allison Rose Suhy, co-founder of the Allison Rose Foundation and Fire Chief of the Cuyahoga Heights Fire Department in Northeast Ohio. 1 in 13 children in the United States live with a food allergy. Allison was one of them. When Allison was diagnosed with a peanut allergy as a toddler, her food allergy was a part of our everyday lives and we were given an emergency action plan that included Benadryl as the first line of defense should she experience a severe anaphylactic reaction then epinephrine if needed. Fortunately, she never experienced anaphylaxis, and when she went off to Ohio University, we felt secure that Allison was equipped with the information she needed to keep herself safe.

On November 3, 2017, I left Independence, Ohio for Dad’s weekend at Ohio University with my little girl. We had the best time on both Friday and Saturday, where I got to meet all her new friends and see why she loved her new life in Athens. As I headed back to my hotel that Saturday night and said goodbye to Allison, I never would have imagined it would be the last time we would ever interact. A couple of hours later I received the call that that every food allergy parent dreads. Allison, for the first time ever, developed an anaphylactic reaction and was being taken, by ambulance, to the nearest hospital. She immediately had to be airlifted to Riverside Hospital right here in Columbus, where, after days, the lack of oxygen she endured during anaphylaxis took her life.

As my wife and I drove home from Columbus, Ohio distraught and shocked after losing Allison, we vowed to turn this tragedy into purpose and ensure Allison's life be honored and her legacy be inspirational. Therefore, in November 2018 we created the Allison Rose Foundation, dedicated to changing the lives of food allergy families through education, awareness, research, and advocacy. In the two years since ARF launched, we have successfully activated a physician-driven, evidence-based food allergy curriculum that has been mainstreamed in more than 60 schools. Even in the wake of the pandemic, we remained focused on bringing this education to students, faculty and staff and worked with our medical advisory and education teams to pivot to a virtual model. This is life-saving education, and we are grateful it is on the path to being encouraged in all Ohio school districts.

We believe the “Allison Rose Act” is an exciting, and critical, first step in encouraging food allergy education and awareness to all Ohio students, faculty, and staff. This Bill is a powerful way to help prevent future food allergy deaths due to anaphylaxis. Therefore, I am here today, because, as food allergy children evolve through their stages of life, their supporting communities change making food allergy education crucial. Severe food allergies continue to be misunderstood. If proper education is put in place from a young age, food allergy sufferers, their support systems, and the general population, will

be properly informed and prepared to understand, recognize, and effectively manage a severe food allergy and life-threatening reaction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today as a proponent of House Bill 231, the "Allison Rose Act," thank you to Rep. Greenspan for sponsoring this legislation, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.