

*Proponent Testimony on HB 37 – John Kennedy*

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, thank you for the opportunity to share proponent testimony on HB 37. My name is John Kennedy. I'm a 54 year old type 1 diabetic and I have lived with diabetes for 27 years now. As a "veteran" type 1 diabetic, I know first-hand how incredibly important it is to have insulin nearby and on-hand at all times. And thanks to Dan Houdeshell's advocacy in our great state – and in other states across the country – diabetics like me now have access to an emergency refill of our life-giving medication.

That's because back in 2015, Ohio passed an emergency prescription refill law (HB 188) called Kevin's Law. This is the law named for Kevin Houdeshell, Dan's son, who lost his life because he was unable to refill his insulin prescription on a holiday weekend. Tragically, his pharmacist could not reach his doctor and could not fill the prescription. Since Ohio passed Kevin's law, 20 other state have done the same and four other states are currently considering it. As mentioned earlier, this is thanks to the tireless efforts of Dan Houdeshell. His family did not want any other family to have to experience what they did – the loss of a loved one; a completely avoidable tragedy.

HB 37 would expand that emergency prescription refill law to allow for 3 emergency refills per year rather than one. I want to pause right here to say why this is so important to expand this refill to 3 per year. As a type 1 diabetic for decades, I know how easy it is to lose insulin due to unforeseen circumstances such as a power outage, or vials that go bad (it happens more than we like to admit), or just bad luck (I have lost several vials due to accidental drops). I have also lost vials on trips for business and on family vacations and thankfully, I was lucky enough to be able to contact my doctor during business hours, and get a prescription filled. But not everyone is so lucky, and luck shouldn't determine whether you live or die. Having up to 3 emergency refills per year is a game-changer for any type 1 diabetic, because life happens; accidents happen. But insulin is our oxygen, and if we don't have access to it for a day, our life systems can begin to fail rapidly, leading to diabetic ketoacidosis and possibly death. Which is why this measure is so incredibly important and necessary.

It is also much, much cheaper to provide emergency insulin rather than cover a hospital visit, or an extended hospitalization to deal with the avoidable complications resulting from not getting access to emergency insulin.

But cost is another really big part of this. I'm sure you have all seen the coverage about the outrageous cost of a vial of insulin – since 2009, the cost has risen from around \$38 a vial to \$300 for a single vial of insulin. This outrageous cost has made it imperative and necessary for insurance to cover this cost. And you may hear some talk out there that diabetics in need could simply use the "Walmart" insulin – that's not the answer – because that's a different form of insulin, a much older version that has not been really used for the last 20 some years. And many diabetics wouldn't know how to properly use it, which is dangerous.

On behalf of all diabetics across our great state of Ohio, I urge you to pass HB 37 to make it easier for diabetics to get the insulin they need to live in emergency situations. This law will save lives, and I humbly ask you for your support.

Sincerely,

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