

Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 21  
House Transportation and Public Safety Committee  
May 4, 2021

Chairman Baldrige, Vice-Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my support for Senate Bill 21.

On October 25, 2018, I nearly died at the age of 30 due to a massive stroke. As Mrs. Ohio 2018, I was using my voice as a titleholder to support others who were not able to speak for themselves. Little did I know, just three weeks off the Mrs. America stage, I would completely lose the ability to speak, read, write and move. I soon became a person whose life depended upon others speaking and advocating for me.

The day I suffered my stroke was the fourth day in a row I had a debilitating headache with neck pain that forced me to leave my job as a social worker to retire to my dark bedroom to seek relief. This would be the night my entire life changed in an instant.

Later that evening, my husband and I were sitting on the couch together, when all of a sudden, I heard a loud pop, followed by the sound of a sizzle that completely filled my head. I was terrified. I tried to tell my husband but found that I physically could not move or speak at all. After about 10 very long seconds, I could finally gain control over my body again, and attempted to speak. My words were real words, but incredibly jumbled. I finally managed to say “hospital”.

My husband took me to a hospital we later found out was a level three stroke center, where I sat in the ER waiting for a CT scan. Almost 20 minutes later, I underwent a CT scan where I was diagnosed with blood clots in my carotid artery and prefrontal cortex. The doctors told my husband that I must be taken to a level one stroke center or I would die from the damage in my brain due to loss of perfusion. An ambulance took me to the nearest level one stroke center where I spent three hours undergoing multiple thrombectomies that would normally take an hour.

But it was too late, the damage was too deep in my brain. Not only could they not remove the clots without causing further damage, but I had completely lost the ability to speak, move, read, and write. I was completely trapped inside of my own body- only able to move my eyes. My surgeons said that if I had arrived even one minute later, I would not be here today.

Losing everything a month after turning 30 years old and living in the ICU for over a month was devastating. The damage was more severe because I was not able to receive TPA, and not able to get into an OR fast enough. Luckily, after spending over a year in intensive speech, occupational, and physical therapy, I have worked to regain a new life.

As a stroke survivor, I have made it my mission to advocate for policies to improve care for other stroke patients, bringing me before your committee today. As I mentioned, we have specialized treatment today, though it is not available at every hospital. Severe stroke patients

have a low rate of response to TPA (clot busting drugs) which are widely available at hospitals. Level 1 stroke centers can perform a minimally invasive catheter-based procedure, called mechanical thrombectomy, in which the clot responsible for the stroke is removed from the patient. With stroke, time is brain and getting a patient to the hospital best suited to provide the appropriate care without the need for additional transports will save lives and improve outcomes for patients.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I urge the committee to favorably vote on this legislation.