

May 6, 2021
Opponent Testimony – SB 17
Ohio Senate Government Oversight & Reform Committee
Sylvia Sanderson, Marshallville, Ohio

Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Craig and Members of the Committee:

As a Stage 2 metastatic breast cancer patient who has benefited from Ohio's Medicaid program, I write to express my opposition to Senate Bill 17.

It was mid-April of 2020 when I discovered a lump in my breast. We were right at the start of everything being shut down due to COVID. My income had ceased, my children were homeschooling, and my husband's hours had been cut. I had no insurance, and no idea what to do.

I knew from being a volunteer with the American Cancer Society and from seeing family members diagnosed with cancer, I couldn't just let it go. My first phone call was to the ACS Cancer Helpline and they gave me the number to the Ohio's Breast and Cervical Cancer Project (BCCP).

I spoke to a helpful woman at the BCCP office and I had an appointment the very next day. At my appointment the doctor confirmed what I felt. She thought there was reason for concern and scheduled me for a mammogram and ultrasound. On May 12th, 2020 I got the phone call I knew was coming. I had stage 2, grade 3 metastatic breast cancer. Thankfully, BCCP helped me get enrolled in Ohio Medicaid. I was presumed eligible and able to get connected to treatment right away.

Procrastinating could have killed me. I was so worried about how much fighting cancer would cost. I was thinking of choosing between getting tested and treated for cancer and whether we could keep food on the table. Being treated for cancer or keeping the lights on.

As a mom of three, I couldn't even fathom these things. I would never let my kids go hungry or without necessities because I MIGHT have cancer. Then, once I DID have cancer, it was a whole new struggle. I wanted to be here for my kids and my husband. I wanted to see them grow up, graduate, get married and have their own families. I wanted to grow old with my husband and sit on the porch in our rocking chairs watching our grandkids play. How though? How could I get these treatments and not lose everything?

I went through 3 different kinds of chemo on a bi-weekly schedule this past year. They each had different side effects but were all were exhausting. The day of my treatment wasn't bad, but by the night of the second day, right before bedtime, that was when the pain would begin.

My hair fell out in clumps until I let my family shave it off and I got to a point where I could no longer eat solid food. For four months I was only able to ingest whole milk, it was the only way I could get calories in my system. Truthfully, it was the only thing keeping me from literally starving.

I hadn't driven myself anywhere in MONTHS. My mother or husband drove me everywhere. I was so weak, driving would have been disastrous and after my surgery I didn't feel comfortable enough to get behind a wheel for two months. Even then, it was tricky because I was still healing and in pain.

Radiation treatments happen EVERY weekday. Going, getting it done, seeing the doctor all takes up about 2-2.5 hours of my day, which isn't terrible, BUT the radiation also zaps my energy, so by the time I get home all I want to do is sleep. I have been fighting so I can be here for my kids, but I haven't been because I'm so exhausted. I can't imagine how much more difficult my and my family's journey would be

if I was forced to comply with all the burdensome requirements in Senate Bill 17. In fact, I may not have gotten coverage as soon as I did, or at all, if Senate Bill 17 had been in place in April 2020.

For all the seriously ill Ohioans who rely on Medicaid, please reject the unnecessary and bureaucratic obstacles proposed in Senate Bill 17.

Sincerely,

Sylvan Sanderson
Marshalville, Ohio