

Annie Cacciato
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TO: The Ohio Senate Health Committee
RE: Proponent Testimony From Annie Cacciato
HB 106 - Designate January as Radon Awareness Month

May 24, 2021

Dear Chairman Stephen A. Huffman, Vice Chair Niraj Antani, Ranking Minority Member Nickie J. Antonio and Distinguished Committee Members,

My name is Annie Cacciato, and I am the longest living person with stage 4 lung cancer in Ohio. Seven years ago, I started to have a sharp pain if I sneezed or coughed. I went to the doctor, and was shocked to discover, that I, someone who led a healthy lifestyle and was a non-smoker had stage 4 lung cancer. My doctors pointed to radon exposure as the culprit. My world was immediately turned upside down.

Most of my exposure came from my school and the building I worked in for years in Licking County. After my diagnosis, I initiated having both buildings tested, and the radon levels came back at around 27 picocuries per liter. This is 10 times over the safe limit with my doctors citing anything more than 2.7 as considered dangerous to lung health.

I had been breathing in a major carcinogen for years – completely unaware of its presence or the damage it was inflicting on my body. It was like a dirty bomb that had no taste, color, or smell – a silent killer with me daily.

No Ohioan needs to be in my situation. This problem is preventable and can be mitigated. However, you cannot fix a problem you are unaware of, and too many people are just that. Unaware of the danger currently present in their homes, businesses, and schools.

I have outlived the prognosis given to me seven years ago. However, lung cancer is an unrelentless disease. This year, the cancer has now moved to my brain and spine. It is why I cannot appear in person before this distinguished body. These days, I am spending my time with my wonderful husband and our three beautiful young adult daughters teaching them life lessons now that I should have had years to do.

Everyone's life should be purposeful and dedicated to the things they care most about. For me, that is my family, faith, creative education, and lung cancer research through the Blue Beautiful Skies fund at Ohio State.

I have dedicated the past 7 years to educate others about radon awareness, and I am humbled that this bill has been named the Annie Cacciato Act in honor of those efforts. The dangers of radon are not being addressed or taken nearly seriously enough in Ohio. Ending all lung cancer from radon is the goal of this Radon Awareness Bill. I respectfully ask that you assist in this effort by supporting the designation of January as Radon Awareness Month in Ohio. We can save Ohioans' lives from radon-induced cancer.

Respectfully,
Annie Cacciato