



Becky Wilger Stapleton

Testimony in support of HB 537

Designation of February 12<sup>th</sup> as Cholangiocarcinoma Awareness Day

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Senate Health Committee – thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of HB 537. This bill would designate February 12th as Cholangiocarcinoma Awareness Day.

My father, Steve Wilger (a retired Cincinnati Police officer of 35 years) was diagnosed in June 2021 with Stage IV Intrahepatic Cholangiocarcinoma at the age of 70. Like many, I had never heard of this cancer. It is extremely rare and very difficult to diagnose with only 10,000 people in the U.S. developing this cancer each year. Many people are over 65 when found, however I am learning of younger people being diagnosed each day. My father fought a heroic 10-month battle and unfortunately passed away on April 15, 2022.

My family and I are involved with The Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation which offers tremendous resources, support and information about this deadly disease. We have been connected to other Ohioans that are currently battling this disease and family members of those that have died from it. Each story is unique as this cancer does not discriminate. My father worked with a specialist for this cancer and was treated and cared for at The James - The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center in Columbus, Ohio and Oncology Hematology Care in Cincinnati, Ohio.

I am a volunteer with The Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation and the “captain” for the State of Ohio and Tennessee in bringing awareness to this through their “Light it Green” campaign that takes place during the month of February. In February, there were hundreds of homes, buildings and bridges lit green across the United States, Europe, Asia & New Zealand. We also received 15 official state proclamations declaring February 12<sup>th</sup> as World Cholangiocarcinoma Awareness Day. In 2023 our goal is to have a proclamation from all 50 states!

My father is my hero and I will continue to fight in his honor. My hope is that this bill provides awareness to those that may be experiencing symptoms and that there will be one less daughter that loses their father way too soon. We must develop a way to screen for this cancer and eventually find a cure.

February is already widely recognized as Cholangiocarcinoma Awareness Month. Designating February 12th as Cholangiocarcinoma Awareness Day is a simple next step to shed light on this rare and deadly disease. My father may have lost his battle with this cancer, but we can win the war!

Once again, Chairman Huffman and Members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 537.