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Support of Bill 364: Aortic Aneurysm Awareness Day

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Bill 364, to enact section 5.2521 of the Revised Code to designate February 13 as “Aortic Aneurysm Awareness Day.”

The aorta is the origin from which all branches of oxygen-rich blood arise. Diseases of this organ include aneurysm (dilation), ulcer, dissection (tearing) and rupture and can carry disastrous consequences to those affected. Yet thousands of residents of Ohio are afflicted with aortic disease and only a fraction of these are aware of it. While an aortic aneurysm often precedes aortic dissection or aortic rupture this is not obligatory. Even when enlarged the aorta infrequently causes symptoms until a catastrophic event occurs. There are also genetic disorders that predispose people to experience aortic dissection earlier in life and at smaller aortic sizes.

Each year an estimated 350 to 550 Ohioans experience an aortic dissection and perhaps the same number will have aortic rupture but the number may be greater because of difficulty with diagnosis. Many of these people will die of their disease because of inability to reach a center in time to provide treatment, and sometimes despite treatment efforts if they do present to a center capable of rendering an intervention.

If we can better identify those people with genetic disorders that predispose them to aortic problems, or when an aortic aneurysm is found by chance or by educated vigilance, it offers the opportunity to intervene in ways to mitigate complications and ideally to prevent a catastrophe. With advanced warning of aortic disease and genetic disorders we can provide therapies and education to slow the progression of disease, surveillance to guide elective interventions before complications occur, and counseling for patients and families.

As a cardiac surgeon I see firsthand the devastating effects of undiagnosed and untreated aortic disease and lament missed opportunities to help our patients before terrible events occur. The

fundamental way to better identify those with aortic disease is to educate the public and raise awareness of aortic disease. With knowledge, people will be more apt to present for screening programs, will be more likely to notice physical features of genetic disorders or potential aortic events in family members.

Our legislative bodies can positively impact the lives of the citizenry unlike any other organization. Having an Aortic Aneurysm Awareness Day in the state of Ohio would draw attention to the disease to further the goal of educating residents of Ohio and help them take charge of their health. It would show that Ohio sees the value in preventative healthcare and being proactive with regard to wellness.

When it comes to knowing who, when, where and how to treat aortic aneurysms we are better today than we were yesterday, but there is always room to improve. Through research and education we can do this. A bill designating February 13th as Aortic Aneurysm Awareness Day would go a long way toward this effort. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center supports House Bill 364. We thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



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