



Stephen J. Wilger

Testimony in support of HB 537

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

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Liston and Members of the House 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.

I was diagnosed in June 2020 with Stage IV Intrahepatic Cholangiocarcinoma. 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 family and I immediately became involved in The Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation which has offered tremendous resources, support and information about this deadly disease. We have met several 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. I was able to find a specialist for this cancer and am currently being treated and cared for at The James - The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center in Columbus, Ohio and Oncology Hematology Care in Cincinnati, Ohio.

My daughter, Becky Stapleton, is a volunteer with The Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation and is the acting 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. They also received 15 official state proclamations declaring February 12<sup>th</sup> as World Cholangiocarcinoma Awareness Day.

I firmly believe that bringing awareness to this devastating cancer will not only help to support research efforts, but will create an outlet for patient like myself suffering from this deadly disease. I hope this bill allows CC patients the opportunity to be seen and provides awareness to those that may be experiencing symptoms. 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 illness.

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