

**Chair Lipps and Members of the Public Health Policy Committee,**

**I am an advocate for the Arthritis Foundation. I got involved with the Arthritis Foundation because my daughter Tori was diagnosed with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis at 6 years old - Tori is now 20 and a junior in college. I am here, on the behalf of Tori and the 3.3 million Ohioans who have arthritis to urge you to support House Bill 177.**

**Tori's journey began just before her 6th birthday when she woke up with a swollen knee. She claimed it didn't hurt and she wanted to go to school. The next morning it was even bigger, the size of a softball. We went to our primary care doctor, got x-rays, head to Nationwide Children's and was admitted to the infectious disease floor because they thought she had a bone infection. While in the hospital Tori asked me to trace her hand to make a hand turkey (Now it's March so that seemed like a weird request). I told her to lay her hand flat - it would not lay flat. That was when we knew more joints than just her knee were swollen and rheumatology was called in.**

**We were lucky, for many years the biologic drug Enbrel controlled Tori's disease. A disease that affects 300,000 kids nationwide. Co-pay assistance helped us afford this medication. Enbrel is just one of many expensive biologic medications that help people with JIA, RA over 100 other types of arthritis. These medications have a sticker price of thousands of dollars a month without insurance or until the deductible is met. There is only one biologic for arthritis that has a generic equivalent and it just went on the market this year so there are usually no less expensive drugs to choose from.**

**For the past 13 years, we have used Co-pay assistance programs for Tori in order to be able to afford Tori's medications. For many years with no worries because insurance allowed it to count our payment towards our high deductible plan so we still had money to cover Tori's doctor visits, tests, and other medications. But in recent years we have had to watch for Accumulator adjustment clauses to be added. Also, Tori's arthritis has been harder to get under control - which means more pain and swelling. Tori has tried 4 different biologics and is now on a monthly infusion medication with a sticker price of \$4000 a month. We are scared to switch insurances. Accumulator adjustments are many times hidden in the fine print. We are scared that our current plan could add the adjustment, which essential "double dips" and takes money from both the Assistance plan and the patient. I know of several people with arthritis who have shared personal stories about co-pay money running out and getting a bill in May or June for the cost of the medication because they had not yet met their deductible. Over a quarter of Ohio's population suffer from arthritis with 37% of them reporting that they have trouble affording their medications. If insurance companies continue to push these adjustors there will be thousands more people that won't be able to afford their medication - causing more long-term disability. Arthritis effects people of all ages - it is not just the elderly. We need your support of HB 177 to help Ohioans afford the medications that allow them to live active, productive lives.**

**Thank you for your consideration.**

**Sincerely,  
Kelly Chellis  
Chair of the Arthritis Foundation State Advocacy Committee**