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Senate Health Committee

Senate Bill 34-Testimony

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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the honor and opportunity to present this testimony on Senate Bill 34.

Senate Bill 34 is designed to bring a spotlight and awareness on a rare and biologically aggressive group of malignancies called sarcomas. Sarcomas are an extremely heterogenous group of malignancies of mesenchymal origin. There are more than 100 histologic types that have been described. As a group they represent approximately 1% of annual cancer burden in the United States. To give this an epidemiologic perspective, there are about 15,000 new cases soft tissue sarcomas and 8-9,000 bone sarcomas diagnosed annually in the United States. This remarkably pales in comparison to other malignancies. As a consequence, they are relatively understudied and present unique set of challenges both to the patient and the physician. Sarcomas afflict both children and adults, though some histologic types such as rhabdomyosarcoma and osteosarcoma (both aggressive sarcomas) show predilection for the young. Given the rarity and complex nature of these tumors, most of the patients are treated at large tertiary centers in the country where highly specialized sarcoma physicians and multidisciplinary sarcoma team exists.

Here at the OSUMC/James Comprehensive Cancer Center, I have been privileged to work alongside some of the best minds in this field to give our patients the best care that offers the best possible outcome. The

management of sarcomas starts with prompt and accurate tissue diagnosis by an expert sarcoma physician pathologist (of which there are only very few in the country). This will ultimately inform the nature and sequence of therapeutic interventions including surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy. The impact of these treatment modalities can be very morbid and disfiguring and in spite of these, the overall survival is disappointingly poor. In recent years, research has uncovered specific targeted therapies that are changing the treatment options and prognosis of the disease. Some of these are now standard of care while others are in the Clinical Trials pipeline. There is thus an urgent need for thorough understanding of the molecular biology of sarcoma with the ultimate goal to developing better treatment strategies. Time is therefore of the essence! Over the past several years, Steps for Sarcoma, an annual event in central Columbus, initiated by my colleague-Dr. Joel Mayerson, specifically for sarcoma survivors, health care providers, friends and families, has become a massive grassroots movement in the great state of Ohio to raise awareness of sarcoma and raise money that funds only sarcoma research in both human and veterinary subjects.

Passing Senate Bill 34 will build on the already existing infrastructure and give a voice and a face to a disease that is all too often ignored and to sufferers who are largely unknown. This will heighten public awareness of this relatively obscure but lethal disease. It will serve as a powerful platform to share and disseminate information resource pertinent to sarcomas. Importantly, this will be an opportunity for the entire community and state to rally around their own and fight a noble cause that could potentially evolve into a nationwide and even world-wide event. I am hopeful that it will galvanize interest and generate support that will fund research that will bring hope to the ailing patients. We all have a part to play and together we can and we will lift this scourge from the eyebrow of mankind!

Thank you once again, Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee for the opportunity to present this testimony in support of

Senate Bill 34. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.