



Wexner
Medical
Center

College of Medicine
Department of Orthopaedics

The Ohio State University
Comprehensive Cancer Center—
Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and
Richard Solove Research Institute

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The Honorable Senator Tim Schaffer
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
1st Floor
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Columbus, Ohio 43215

March 3, 2023

Re: Letter of Support – Senate Bill #34 – Hank’s Law

Dear Senator Schaffer:

I am writing to convey my staunch support for Senate Bill #34, Hank’s Law, where the intent is to designate one calendar month annually as “Sarcoma Awareness Month”. This is currently celebrated nationally in July each year. Sarcoma is an exceedingly rare form of cancer that occurs in connective tissues such as bone, muscle, tendon, cartilage, nerve sheath, and blood vessels. This group of rare cancers encompasses approximately one percent of cancers in humans and ten percent of tumors in dogs. Available treatments are comprised of chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and radical surgery that often lead to serious quality of life issues in the post-operative surveillance period.

I have made it my career passion to care for and perform research to improve the lives and life expectancy of sarcoma patients in Ohio and around the world. Late last year in December 2022, I unexpectedly learned about one of the most difficult challenges I have ever faced. My own mother was diagnosed with a special type of soft tissue sarcoma called retroperitoneal de-differentiated liposarcoma. She initially presented with a very advanced stage of this disease on December 7, 2022. She tried to undergo treatment with chemotherapy, but this was not successful, and she passed away from her sarcoma on January 17, 2023, just under 6 weeks from diagnosis. Since this is still a very recent event (only six short weeks ago), I am still grieving the loss of my mother due to sarcoma. I am now even more determined to support the passage of this bill. We need more awareness that will lead to earlier diagnosis. Diagnosed at an earlier stage, my mother may have survived. Without improved public awareness people will continue to be diagnosed later in their disease and have decreased survival. Your support of this bill can save lives! Even my own mother who was private about her medical affairs and understood full well what I do on a professional level still was unaware that this rare cancer was growing in her body and that talking to her physician may have helped get her diagnosed and treated before it was too late. So, on both a personal and a professional level, I implore you to support and pass this extremely important bill. It will save the lives of Ohioans who may not have been aware of the severity of their problem to seek treatment that could be lifesaving.

Increased awareness is needed since there have been no essentially new forms of therapy introduced since the late 1970s. Without treatment advances, the overall survival for sarcoma remains under fifty percent at five years. Dogs have an increased prevalence of sarcoma and therefore represent an outstanding model to study human sarcoma disease. As such, new therapies can be rapidly moved from the laboratory bench into clinical trials, and collaborations between faculty at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center and the College of Veterinary Medicine have made important progress in understanding the cancer biology of both canine and human patients needed as we develop new therapies relevant to both dogs and humans. Passage of Senate Bill #34 will increase public awareness of the imperative to develop new therapies for this all too often lethal human and canine form of cancer. I appreciate the opportunity to bring these realities to your attention and ask both that you bring this bill to the Senate floor and for your vote to pass Senate Bill #34 into law.

As the Medical Director of Sarcoma Services at The James Cancer Hospital at the Wexner Medical Center/The Ohio State University College of Medicine, I would be honored to give you a tour of the facilities at our institution if you would like to pay us a visit. We have one of the most comprehensive sarcoma centers in the entire country that allows us to provide innovative care options to the citizens of the State of Ohio. Passage of SB #34 will help us improve the care we provide to people from all over Ohio and beyond.

Sincerely,



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