

February 17, 2015

Testimony in Support of HB 5500: AN ACT REQUIRING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR FERTILITY PRESERVATION FOR INSURED DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER.

Good afternoon Sen. Crisco, Rep. Megna and esteemed members of the Insurance and Real Estate committee. My name is Mike Smith and I come before you today not as a Lobbyist but as a 6 1/2 year Cancer survivor in support of HB 5500. There are some fantastic studies with hard statistics which have been submitted to this Committee, a great 2013 Study by UConn's Center for Public Health and Health Policy, I can't compete with their formal analysis but I can offer my story and my voice to help provide a patient and survivor's perspective.

On July 11th 2008, between my junior and senior year of college, I joined what I now fondly call "the club" of cancer survivors. It's a club where we never want new members but once you're a member we don't want you to leave. As you can imagine hearing the words "you have cancer" changes one's life forever. I went from preparing to start my senior year of college and begin grad school to writing my own curriculum for a crash course in chemotherapy protocols. Over the following 4 months I would endure 6 rounds of chemo, 30 odd days in the hospital, a dozen blood transfusions and more "death waivers" than I ever want to remember. Death waivers are those waivers have to sign before you are given the lifesaving chemo drugs, because first you must acknowledge that those same lifesaving drugs may cause immediate death or just serious long term side effects decades down the road. It wasn't fun or easy but I will happily say that I am one of the lucky ones.

Lucky that my mother had a job with great health insurance, I was lucky I lived in Milford which is only 10 minutes from the world class cancer hospital at Yale and I was lucky that I was a guy so my fertility preservation decisions were easier. As with many things in life there is a gender disparity, and with many things in life the process women must undergo to preserve fertility is longer and more expensive.

Since finishing treatment 6 years ago I have been focused on working to minimize the role "luck" has in cancer odyssey of others. Often that means that I spend countless hours on a bike riding thousands of miles raising tens of thousands of dollars to support cancer research and survivorship programs. But today I am here.

Here to explain some of the tough decisions young adults face when going through treatment specifically about fertility preservation. As you have all heard the sooner cancer is caught the easier it is to treat, the sooner treated the more likely the outcome will be positive. Time matters, weeks, days even hours matter. The cancer I was diagnosed with, Burkitt's Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, is a very aggressive form with tumors having the ability to double in size in 24 hours. When time of the essence the choice of treatment now or children later is not an easily decision to make. Sometimes fertility preservation requires delaying treatment so that an individual can compete fertility preservation treatments, a tough choice, but one some people choose. Of the many variables a patient has to weigh in determining their treatment protocols, the decision to preserve the opportunity to have children in the future should not be determined by the ability to scrape together enough cash to cover the cost of fertility preservation treatments.

In 2015 when CT insurance plans cover the cost of infertility treatments later in life it seems only logical invest a relatively small sum of money on the front end \$0.06 per member per month, to minimize costs of intense fertility treatments in the out years.

I'm here to urge you to support HB550 because when individuals are gearing up to fight for their life and make serious decisions about treatment protocols fertility preservation is a big enough decision and those decisions should not hinge on the amount of cash a patient has in their checking account.

Thank you and I will happily answer any questions.

Mike Smith

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