

**Testimony of Kyla Pokorny, patient at Connecticut Children's Medical Center,
to the Appropriations Committee
February 11, 2016**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Kyla Pokorny, I'm a 2015 graduate of Enfield High School and I'm a patient at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. I am excited to be here tonight to tell you a little about myself.

Back in 2011 when I was 14 years old, I was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma, bone cancer of my scapula, and it began my journey of a lifetime. I met Dr. Mike Isakoff who turned out to be the most amazing doctor that I could've imagined having. Over the past five years I have undergone chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery, and I have participated in two clinical trials including one where they analyzed my genes and personalized a treatment plan that would work best for me. I didn't have to travel anywhere. I had access to state of the art care right here in Connecticut.

Sometimes the treatment is really hard, but one of the best things about Dr. Mike and my whole care team at Connecticut Children's is that they try to give you as much control as you can have which is important during a time when you feel like you have none. When I have an opinion about my treatment, they listen. When my friends and I have suggestions about how they could make changes at the oncology clinic on the 5th floor, they take it seriously.

I have made lots of friends over the years at Connecticut Children's. Since I have become a good advocate for myself, my nurses will ask me to meet with new patients to show them my port or explain how treatments can make you feel. I have helped answer questions from parents of younger patients when their child begins treatment.

I am very lucky to have a great care team at Connecticut Children's and I'm so lucky that all of this great care was available so close to my home in Enfield. The staff at Connecticut Children's care for me as an individual person. I'm not just another patient to them. And there's never a time where my family or I feel uncomfortable because for every question we have, they always have an answer. Not only have they cared for me, they have profoundly altered my life, they were role models and heroes, and have shown me who I want to be, and what I want to do.

Over the last five years my cancer has recurred twice, including last fall when I had to take a leave from my freshman year at UConn where I was in the nursing program. I hope to become a pediatric oncology nurse. I would have never volunteered to go through what I've gone through, however, like any other struggle, cancer has changed me. I wish that the way I learned about overcoming struggle was through something other than cancer, but life is unpredictable and we don't always get to choose our battles. Looking back, having cancer made me fully appreciate life and everything it has to offer. It taught me to be optimistic and has allowed me to live in the moment.

I know we are here tonight regarding the state budget, so I wanted you to know just how important Connecticut Children's Medical Center has been to me and my family. More than half of the patients at Connecticut Children's are covered by the State's HUSKY plan. I hope that when you are making decisions about HUSKY, you remember how much it has meant for me to get great care from wonderful people right here in Connecticut.