

Courtney Owen

From: zaverls@gci.net
Sent: Monday, March 4, 2024 6:32 PM
To: Tristan Walsh; Rep. Zack Fields; Courtney Owen
Subject: HB 285

Good evening Representative Fields, Ms. Owen & Mr. Walsh,

I am sorry I called in late today to testify for HB 285. I'm a Principal in Fairbanks and after school it got a little busy! I wanted to share what I was going to say this afternoon. If I can help in anyway for this bill, please let me know! Thank you.

Hello and thank you so much for allowing me to testify today. My name is Becky Zaverl & I am a third generation Alaskan born & raised in Fairbanks, AK.

I am calling to let you know, first hand, the importance of diagnostic breast screening. My story is a little long winded, but my cancer journey started when I was only 12 years old. We didn't have the medical treatments I needed in Fairbanks so my family and I flew to Seattle where I was diagnosed at Univ of Washington with Hodgkins Lymphoma. I was treated with radiation therapy. That radiation saved my life, but also caused some long term effects. I want you to imagine your favorite 12 year old. I still remember my mom asking the doctor to do whatever it takes to get me to graduation.

My story is one of time and medical progress. I graduated high school and then college and started teaching special education in Fairbanks. I married my high school sweetheart and we started a family. The one and only oncologist in Fairbanks, Dr. Mike Carroll, knew that my life would most likely see cancer reoccurrence or occurrence of a new kind. He taught me to be diligent with lymph node checks, 6 month check ups and he taught me what to look out for. The radiation field covered my from my neck to my groin. Everything was in the line of fire. It stopped the cancer growth, but it also caused lung collapses and Thyroid cancer soon after I got married. Dr. Carroll told me thyroid and breast cancer were going to be what we watch out for. I was given breast screenings at the ripe age of 28. Screenings save lives. I know I had a reason to be screened, but if I was having to pay for it, without insurance help, I would have skipped it.

My yearly mammograms were tough for me. They were a reminder of cancer, but I kept telling myself I was in the position of power. I could control things. Cancer makes you feel very out of control. Screenings and knowledge become power. My mammograms were clear for 6 years. Enough time for me to have three babies. I had twins in 2009 and in 2011 my mammogram showed an abnormality. I had three girls under the age of 7 and I was scared to death. Because I was on top of my screenings and because I was given a clear path to receive them, we caught my breast cancer at stage 1. I underwent a double mastectomy and I went on to being a busy mom and teacher. Life is too wonderful to allow interruptions.

HB 285 would prohibit insurers that cover diagnostic breast imaging from requiring cost sharing for the procedure, eliminating all out-of-pocket costs. Eliminating cost-sharing provides more equal access to care and ensures more timely diagnosis of breast cancer, improving health outcomes for those diagnosed with breast cancer and reducing overall costs to the healthcare system. If we can detect these cancers early we can save millions in treatment dollars and we can save lives.

Life gets hard. I've been a volunteer for the American Cancer Society since I graduated college in 1998. I have met many people and their families who just heard the words "you have cancer". I'm telling you when you're in that doctors office you want to make sure you have done everything you can do. You have the opportunity to give to give control and power to the people of Alaska. Please remove the roadblocks to keep our families and friends healthy.

Thank you,
Becky Zaverl