

## **Donna Lewis, Carson's Mother Final Testimony – House Bill 672**

Hello, Honorable Chair and members of the Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Donna Lewis, and I'm a Maryland mother here because of my son Carson, who was diagnosed with osteosarcoma at 16 and died at 19.

Carson had the perfect combination of fire, gentleness, and brilliance. He was strong, outspoken, and hilarious. But more than anything, Carson loved justice. In school and in life, he stood up for kids who were picked on, made them feel safe and seen, and fiercely protected them. That's just who Carson was a fighter for what was right. He would have made change in this world. Of that, I have no doubt.

Carson endured treatment after treatment. In the end, he developed therapy-related AML, a secondary leukemia caused by the very chemo that was supposed to save him. That's when we were told there were no more options. All treatment stopped. And the clock began to count down.

Children with osteosarcoma still receive almost the exact same chemotherapy used more than 40 years ago. The protocol hasn't changed and it isn't working.

Carson was extraordinary, but his outcome was not. Too many families live with this same nightmare. When a child like Carson still has life in them still has hope, still wants one more chance at treatment that child deserves it. And so does the world. One of these kids might cure a disease. One might change a law. One might lead a revolution in care. But only if we invest.

House Bill 672 ensures that Maryland's pediatric cancer funding goes where the actual research happens: nonprofit research institutions and children's hospitals the ones best equipped to turn funding into real, effective treatment.

Families like mine are often told, "There's nothing more we can do." But that's not true. The truth is: there are options. They just haven't been funded. And the world cannot afford to ignore that any longer.

As such, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 672.

Thank you for letting me speak Carson's name today. It would be this mother's greatest honor if the change he was meant to make in the world begins here with this bill, and with you.