

March 10, 2023

Delegate Szeliga

House Health and Government Operations Committee

**HB 1611 – Public Health – Human Papillomavirus Vaccine – Information and Informed Consent (Christina’s Law)**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Delegate Szeliga and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my strong support for **HB 1611- Public Health – Human Papillomavirus Vaccine – Information and Informed Consent (Christina’s Law)**

In 2014, during a routine annual check-up with her pediatrician, my then 13-year old daughter was offered a vaccine to prevent Human Papillomavirus infection, a cause of cervical and other cancers. I was present during the visit. I told the pediatrician that I wanted to know more about the vaccine, as I did not know much about it. I was not offered any written information, including a VIS (which I learned later is supposed to be provided). The pediatrician was quite insistent that this was an important vaccine for her girls, that she should have received the first one last year, and that it was quite safe and effective. I held firm that I wanted to research more before having my daughter receive this vaccine. During this exchange, I could see my daughter was quite alarmed at the thought of getting cervical cancer.

I left the room so the pediatrician could examine my daughter. During this time, my daughter consented and received the vaccine. I did not find this out until after we left the office. I did call the office to express my disagreement with their tactics (and we did not return to that office again). I resolved that she would not receive the second dose.

Within a month of receiving the vaccine, my daughter became quite ill, with severe fatigue, joint aches, dizziness, and fever. At the urgent care, she was tested for flu and strep, and tests came back negative. She was dehydrated, so she received intravenous saline and felt much better. However, her relief was short-lived.

Since her HPV vaccine, her health has limited her ability to live a fully functional life. She spent much of her middle-school and early high school years unable to physically attend classes due to her symptoms. These symptoms were extreme and included Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia (POTS) syndrome, which prevented her from leaving her bed for days, and from working out. We spent many hours and dollars working with physicians to discover the cause of her POTS. She was treated aggressively for Lyme, babesia, bartonella, Epstein-Barr, and mycoplasma, among other infections, that suddenly emerged due to her vastly suppressed immune function. She became anxious and clinically depressed, which entailed further medical interventions. All her providers were puzzled as to why and how her body suddenly became so ill and could no longer keep in check infections it once used to.

It wasn't until 2019, upon meeting individuals in a local chapter of the National Dysautonomia Association, that I began to connect the dots to my daughter's sudden onset of chronic illness to the HPV vaccine. If not the absolute cause of my daughter's chronic illness it was, at the least, the tipping point, the final straw that unleashed her body's revolt against itself.

After years of extensive treatments including physical therapy, dietary changes, and many antibiotics, supplements, and psychiatric medications, I am happy to say my daughter has regained much of her health. She is medication free and able to navigate stairs, hike, and drive a car. She still has 'flares' and must watch her fluid intake and exercise carefully but is able to attend college full-time and work part-time. That said, life exhausts her; she will likely never possess the vitality of her peers.

As a mother, the greatest regret of my life is leaving my daughter alone with her pediatrician, a person I thought I trusted. Both my daughter and I now possess a healthy suspicion of medical treatments pushed too hard by providers.

My daughter lost almost a decade of her life due to the consequences of a single shot. She and I both agree that had we had adequate informed consent she would have made a different choice regarding HPV vaccination. She would have not been coerced into receiving the vaccine. But she did not receive enough or adequate information to be fully informed.

**Informed consent cannot be made without full information.**

I ask you to please support HB1161 Human Papillomavirus Vaccine – Information and Informed Consent (Christina's Law). Do it for Christina, do it for my daughter. Do it for your daughters and sons.

Thank you.

Linda Wastila, BPharm, MSPH, PhD