

Cold cap bill

I am writing today to request that you fully support HB 1187 that will be heard on March 6. This bill will require insurance companies to pay for cold capping for chemotherapy patients. Last year, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I was devastated. When my oncologist informed me that I would need chemo, I was beyond upset. The effects on my body were going to be terrible, but I really did not want to lose my hair too.

My doctor then informed me about cold capping and I decided to do it. It cost me \$1400 out of pocket and my insurance company has denied my claim. I'm still trying to get reimbursed. I am fortunate enough that I was able to put out that money, but many women cannot and would not currently be able to cold cap.

I decided to cold cap for several reasons. First, my mental health had already taken a toll after my diagnosis. I knew that losing all my hair would be very difficult for me to handle. As you know, as a woman, our hair is part of our identity. I couldn't control the cancer or what was happening to my body, but this was something I could control. I didn't want to look in the mirror and see a stranger looking back. I didn't want to look sick. I didn't want people to feel sorry for me. I wanted to maintain as much of myself as possible during this extremely difficult time.

Another reason that I wanted to cold cap is that I am a Kindergarten paraeducator. I had chemo over the summer and I didn't want to return to work looking sick. I certainly still felt terrible, but I could hide it. Kids in all the grades know me and I didn't want them to feel scared or upset by knowing I had cancer or anything wrong with me.

I still lost about half of my hair, but I never had to endure the trauma of shaving my head. I can go places now and no one has to know what I've been through. In fact, when I told many co-workers, they had no idea because I still had hair. I didn't have to worry about people treating me differently or looking upon me with pity.

Additionally, cold capping preserves the hair follicles. This allows for regrowth to be faster. One of the chemo drugs I received, Taxotere, has been known to cause permanent alopecia. By preserving follicles with cold capping, this does not happen.

I'm currently almost 7 months out from chemo. Women who don't cold cap have extremely short hair at this point, while I have an almost full head of hair. I can go out and no one has to know. Dealing with the after effects of cancer and survivorship is hard, but having hair and looking "normal" gives me the confidence I need to persevere.

I think the MD legislature understands all this as there is already a law requiring insurance companies to cover

wigs for chemotherapy patients. If wigs are covered, cold capping should be too.

I could go on and on and send you studies that show how cold capping improves mental health outcomes, preserves follicles and more, but I am hopeful that my story and the story of others like me, will be enough to convince you to fully support HB 1187.

Please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Allison Scharf

Maryland 12A legislative district