

Statement in Support of House Bill 1187

My name is Gayle Verreault, and I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2013. At that time, my treatment required a double mastectomy without nipple sparing. I share this because, as a woman, losing such a significant part of my identity was incredibly difficult. While I was fortunate to avoid chemotherapy then, I was strongly advised to undergo a total hysterectomy due to my diagnosis, family history, and the presence of the BRCA gene. Once again, losing another part of what makes me a woman—and the changes that came with it—was a painful experience.

Fast forward to 2023, I was diagnosed with an aggressive breast cancer that required chemotherapy. The thought of losing my hair was extremely stressful and made me feel self-conscious. Hair loss is an outward sign of illness, how would this effect my children. I worried about how I would continue working in the school system with young elementary students. How would they see me? Would they understand?

When I learned about scalp cooling systems as a way to preserve my hair, I was eager to try it. However, discovering that my insurance would not cover it added another layer of stress—how could we afford it? Despite the financial strain, I decided to proceed with cold capping. I was able to keep my hair for most of my treatment, though eventually, I chose to cut my hair short due to hair thinning and clumping. Still, I continued using the cooling system throughout the remaining treatments. I firmly believe that it helped restrict blood flow to the scalp, reducing the amount of chemotherapy reaching my hair follicles. As a result, I noticed that my hair grew back faster and thicker compared to others undergoing treatment at the same time who did not use cold capping.

I truly believe that cold capping made a significant difference in my cancer journey. No one should have to choose between preserving their dignity and affording treatment. I strongly support HB 1187 and urge its passage to ensure that insurance coverage includes this vital option for patients facing chemotherapy.

Sincerely,
Gayle Verreault