



## **PETITION TO INCREASE FEDERAL FUNDING OF CHILDHOOD CANCER RESEARCH**

As a parent to a child diagnosed and living with childhood cancer, I am forced to have hard conversations with oncologists and deliver bad news to my daughter, neighbors, and friends, which has become part and parcel of my daily life.

My daughter Mia Ehlers is three years old and has been battling leukemia since she was diagnosed with blood cancer at the tender age of one. She loves to play dolls and make-up, but she cannot engage in other child-loving activities like her peers due to her general body weakness. Mia Ehlers' life story is no different from other children living with childhood cancer.

Glaring statistics from the National Cancer Institute inform us that **childhood cancer is the leading cause of death by disease past infancy among children in the United States**. It is estimated in 2022, that over 15,600 children will be diagnosed with childhood cancer, and 1,780 will die of the

## **disease in the United states.**

From the very beginning of its diagnosis, leukemia has been affecting the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual aspects of her childhood, including myself and her mother. Childhood cancer patients and their families go through overwhelming experiences as they exude aggression, anxiety, depression, and communicational problems. Moreover, these children and their caregivers have to bear the brunt of going through the current horrendous and inhumane treatment process, treatment complications and many other care. related problems.

Notably, the parents of children with cancer go through shock, seek denial, and live with double pressure. Their children's disease affects every aspect of their family lifestyle. Consequently, the **quality of life is diminished**. Family life is disrupted as family members **struggle with a 'new normal' that consists of frequent hospital visits, overwhelming medical bills, and a questionable future where the possibility of the child's death** at a young age is always lingering in their minds.

Children who have cancer may be **years behind in school and often face the challenge of lasting attentional and memory problems and hearing loss, and other physical limitations**. There is a constant fear of relapse, which leaves caregivers and families on constant and overwhelming guard, wondering and worried about the slightest change in body temperature or headache.

As a father and caregiver, I have witnessed my daughter experiencing the long-term psychological effects of intensive cancer treatments. I have seen her living in a constant state of **anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress**. Her lengthy hospital stays, reoccurrence, increased treatment intensity worsens her post-traumatic stress, which is accompanied by **nightmares** or flashbacks that make her want to avoid people, places, or things associated with the treatment experience. Further, she has difficulty feeling emotions, feeling helpless, distant, or cut off from others, and feeling anxious or easily startled. These overwhelming experiences are also shared by myself and her mother.

It is noteworthy that the federal government has allocated a mere 4% of government funding for cancer research in the U.S., which is far from enough. This percentage needs to be increased to 8% for proper research. The signing of this petition will facilitate the lobbying and passing of a healthcare policy or law that allocates a higher percentage of national resources to childhood cancer research. The increased funds would be a much-needed shot in the arm as public healthcare institutions would constantly be actively researching childhood cancer all year round, rather than wait for September, the Childhood Cancer Awareness month.

By signing this petition, you would be going the extra mile beyond creating awareness over childhood cancer and instead push for the **increased budgetary allocation towards this noble cause and enable researchers to find improved ways to identify children that are genetically predisposed to developing childhood cancer, prevent the occurrence of cancer upon a child, better treatment favorable to the child, shorten the time spent in medication, alleviate post treatment side effects, and possibly develop childhood cancer vaccines.**

Currently, Mia Has 260 days left of cancer treatment. The thought of having my daughter go through the awful experience is emotionally and mentally draining. If the federal government channeled the necessary funds towards childhood cancer research decades ago, then my daughter and tens of thousands of other suffering children and their families would be spared the pain they are currently going through. By signing this petition, you will be paving the way for the concerned stakeholders to make a direct and lasting impact upon the lives of many future generations of children and their kin. We need 12 million signatures behind this petition to begin lobbying for raising the current fund allocated towards childhood cancer research from 4% to 8%.

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