



PETITION TO INCREASE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER RESEARCH

Cadence Ryan Ford was diagnosed with Acute lymphoblastic leukemia on March 21st, 2016 at just 18 months old. This is a type of cancer of the blood and bone marrow that affects white blood cells. ALL is the most common childhood cancer, occurring when a bone marrow cell develops errors in its DNA. Symptoms may include enlarged lymph nodes, bruising, fever, bone pain, bleeding from the gums, and frequent infections. Decrease of appetite and night sweats are also symptoms that often occur with this type of cancer. It is estimated that there will be approximately 6,600 new cases of ALL in the United States in 2022. While acute lymphoblastic leukemia is more common in children than other types of childhood cancer, it has high cure rates. The 5-year relative survival rate for ALL is 68.8%.

Before his diagnosis, I noticed that Cadence began wanting to take more naps than usual and he was very lethargic. I also noticed the lymph nodes in his neck were much larger than usual. I immediately called his physician to see if I should bring him in sooner than the 18-month checkup appointment I had made for him. I was told by the nurse that as long as he did not have a fever that it would be ok to wait. 2 days after that phone call Cadence woke up with large cyst like bumps on his bottom. They were very painful to him and he would not stand or attempt to walk. I knew right away something was wrong. I called the pediatrician back and he said to bring him in right away. Once we arrived blood work was done right away. Within 20 minutes the tests came back and revealed that he had acute lymphoblastic leukemia. The tests also showed that he was severely anemic and required a blood transfusion as soon as possible.

We were immediately transferred to the Children's hospital in Birmingham, Alabama where he was admitted on arrival. He was given blood products and stabilized and the next day was scheduled to have a bone marrow biopsy and a port put in. Chemotherapy began directly after and it was very tough on him. Cadence was inpatient for the rest of 2016 due to many health factors. He had adverse effects from the chemotherapy including many serious infections. He suffered fevers often which had to be monitored closely due to his immune system being so compromised. As Cadence's great grandmother and his legal guardian, I was the one who was beside him throughout his hospital stay. I was so afraid of the unknown and terrified of what could potentially happen to him. No matter how much I wanted to take his pain away, there was nothing I could do but pray. Watching him suffer was the hardest thing I have ever had to endure in my life.

Calling Cadence, a warrior would be an understatement. He fought so hard and he was very determined at such a young age to win this battle he was fighting. On Christmas day of 2016, he began the third phase of treatment and appeared to be stable enough to go home. He did end up being admitted back into the hospital on a few occasions due to pneumonia, fever and infections but it was not continuous. His chemotherapy treatments ended in August of

2019 and he remains stable. Although I am extremely grateful that he is in remission and doing well I am still fearful knowing the cancer could come back at any time. I do not think that worry will ever go away. This is why I am so passionate about doing all I can to help raise awareness for childhood cancer. These children deserve a voice and I am determined to be that voice. There are far too many children battling this awful disease and more needs to be done to put an end to childhood cancer once and for all.

Each year in the United States there are an estimated 15,780 children between the ages of birth and 19 years of age who are diagnosed with cancer. Roughly 1 in 285 children in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer before their 20th birthday. Globally there are more than 300,000 children diagnosed with cancer each year. Over the past 40 years, the number of children diagnosed with leukemia has increased by 35%. Cancer remains the most common cause of death for children in America. This is why it is so crucial that we sign this petition to help see changes happen for these children and families.

The federal government is allocating a mere 4% for funding for childhood cancer research. This is not nearly enough. It is crucial that we do what is necessary to see this percentage rise to 8%. By signing this petition, you will help facilitate lobbying and the advance of a healthcare policy that will allot a higher percentage of resources for childhood cancer research. This could help researchers potentially find a childhood cancer vaccine that in turn would help alleviate children from so much suffering due to treatments and give them a fighting chance. Please sign and share this petition and help us be the voice for these children.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN](#)