



### PETITION TO INCREASE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER RESEARCH

In February of 2018, our son Dennis Jr (DJ) was diagnosed with Ewing sarcoma. This is a very rare type of cancerous tumor that grows in your bones or the soft tissue around your bones. It usually affects people from the ages of 10 to 20 years of age. This type of cancer affects about 200 children and young adults every year in the United States and shows up slightly more often in males. But the tumor can appear typically in any bone. Based on age, the overall 5-year survival rate for this type of cancer is 76% for children younger than 15 and 59% for teens ages 15 to 19. If the tumor has spread to distant areas at the time of diagnosis (metastasis), the 5-year survival rate is 38%.

There are numerous symptoms caused by Ewing Sarcoma. Because cancerous tumors attack healthy cells, it is common for those with this type of cancer to feel sick frequently. A recurring fever that may never seem to go away is also something that can happen. Typically, this type of fever is not high enough to cause you to worry, but a person with Ewing's sarcoma will appear tired and rundown. Another indication that your child may have this type of cancer is if they complain of sore legs associated with limping for more than a couple of days.

Hearing the word cancer was terrifying to my husband and I. Like most parents, we never thought this would happen to our child. DJ was a relatively healthy child before his diagnosis. He was an avid soccer player and loved the sport. Cancer changed everything for our son. It turned our world upside down. Chemotherapy was awful for DJ. The medicines he was given were for adults but there were no other options. The hurdles my husband and I had to jump through just to get help and the correct type of care as well as medicine was unbelievable. It was difficult to sit by watching him suffer due to his treatments but there was nothing we could do. He often asked my husband and I if he would even make it to his next birthday. Not only was the unknown frightening to our son, it was equally scary to us. How do you tell your child that they will win their fight when you truly have no idea if they will? Aside from watching him in pain this was the hardest part of his journey for us.

DJ was a warrior and he fought hard to win his battle against this vicious disease. Sadly, on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 he lost his fight. My husband and I were by his side the entire 14 months of his journey. We never wanted him to feel alone. The pain of losing our son will never go away. The things we witnessed will forever be etched in our minds. It has been a very emotional and exhausting time for us and still is. We struggle daily and truly believe our son was not properly cared for in the beginning of his diagnosis. He was turned away from the hospital shortly before his passing and that was just another question our precious son asked us soon before he left this earth. Why do these doctors want to send me home to die and not fight harder for me? No parent should ever have to answer that kind of question and no child should ever have to ask.

Both my husband and I are dedicated to keeping our son's memory alive. We are dually as passionate about helping raise awareness for childhood cancer. We run a small food bank in honor of DJ and donate a majority of the proceeds to St. Baldricks Foundation. This is a volunteer and donor powered charity committed to supporting the most promising research to

find a cure for childhood cancer. We will do everything we can to get our sons voice heard through us, to anyone who will listen.

Approximately 10,470 children in the United States under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with cancer in 2022. 17.8 cancer diagnoses per 100,000 children ages younger than 15 years old. In children under 15, leukemia makes up 28% of all childhood cancers. The second most common type of childhood cancer is brain cancer at 26%, followed by lymphoma at 12%. There are far too many children having to suffer because of this horrific disease. Right now, the federal government is only granting a scant 4% for funding for childhood cancer research. Discernibly, this is not enough. It is crucial that we do all we can to see this percentage rise to 8%. By signing this petition, you will help to facilitate lobbying and the advance of a healthcare policy that will appropriate a higher percentage of resources for childhood cancer research. This would then allow researchers a greater chance to potentially find a childhood cancer vaccine. Let's be the voice for these children. Please join me in signing and sharing this petition.

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