



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

Dominic Liples was diagnosed with Diffuse midline glioma H3 K27M-mutant on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at only 7 years old. DMG h3k27m-mutant is a high-grade glioma. It is a distinct subtype of glial tumors. These are lethal high-grade pediatric brain tumors that are inoperable and without cure. Most children with this type of cancer die within 1 year of diagnosis. Sadly, there is a 0% survival rate. Children with this type of cancer eventually develop worsening neurologic deficits, brainstem dysfunction and hydrocephalus, before succumbing to their disease.

Dominic was a healthy happy boy. For roughly a week he began showing signs that he was not feeling well. He was at a pool party when I noticed that he was struggling in the pool. I then watched as his arm had a tremor. That next morning, I saw that his socks and shoes were still sitting on the floor and the school bus was on its way. He explained to me that sometimes he does not like to use his left arm. I helped him put on his socks and shoes and as he walked down the hallway to leave, I noticed him walking with a slumped left shoulder. I immediately made several calls while he was at school and made an appointment at the doctor's office for late that afternoon. When he stepped off the bus and began walking toward our home his left foot was dragging. By the time we left for his appointment which was within an hour upon him returning home, his smile was crooked. Once we arrived at the doctor's office we were immediately sent to the ER. On the way to the emergency room, I stopped to pick up a frozen yogurt for my son as I knew he had not had any dinner and would possibly have blood drawn.

The yogurt ended up being the last thing he was allowed to eat for the next several days so I am thankful I made that stop.

Blood work and a CT scan were done immediately. The results of the CT scan showed a large mass on his brain. 2 days later the doctors did a biopsy and it came back as a cancerous tumor and that is when our world fell apart. Cancer is a scary word but to hear tumor on our son's brain was even more horrifying. We did not know what to expect but knew he would not survive. It took approximately 1 month for Dominic to recover from his tumor resection surgery and then chemotherapy treatments began at Children's hospital of Philadelphia. Watching our son suffer and know we could do nothing was extremely difficult. As a parent you want to comfort them and take away their pain and fear but cancer robs you of that. He also underwent radiation treatments at Penn Medicine's Abramson Cancer Center. Between both chemotherapy and radiation our sweet son lost his beautiful black hair. That was tough for him and even harder for me. I loved when he would run his fingers through my hair anytime I was next to him and I could no longer do that for him. That is a memory I will never forget.

There are roughly 10,470 children in the United States under the age of 15 that will be diagnosed with cancer in 2022. On average, about 16% of children die within 5 years of diagnosis. Globally, it is estimated that 400,000 new cases of cancer affect children each year. This number may be vastly underestimated due to the large numbers of undiagnosed cases. Regardless of these facts, childhood cancer research is consistently underfunded. Something needs to be done so that our children have a fighting chance at a normal life. Too many children are losing their battle to cancer and nothing will change if we do not stand up to cancer and make a change happen.

Sadly, on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 our precious son lost his battle to cancer. Our grief is never gone completely. I miss watching Dominic's excitement as he built numerous things with his

Legos. He always wanted to help out no matter what the task was. He was a protector and best friend to his younger brother Ciarlo who suffers from Spina Bifida and is paralyzed from the waist down. He misses his big brother so much and wears the color red in remembrance of him as red was Dominic's favorite color. We have always and continue to count the day the mass was found as his diagnosis day and refer to his passing as his Angel date. He fought so hard and was such a brave boy. That is why I am so passionate about spreading the word on childhood cancer. I want to be the voice that our son no longer has. He deserves to be recognized and with everything I have in me I will make sure that is done.

The federal government is allocating a baffling 4% funding for childhood cancer research. This is not nearly enough funding to make a difference for these children and families fighting such a devastating disease. It is crucial that we see that percentage rise to 8%. By signing this petition, you will help facilitate lobbying and the advance of a healthcare policy that will designate a higher percentage of resources for childhood cancer research. A higher percentage will give researchers more opportunities to possibly find a childhood cancer vaccine or potentially a cure. We are in need of 12 million signatures to advance to the next step in this process. Please sign and share this petition and stand with us to help put an end to childhood cancer once and for all.

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