



PETITION TO INCREASE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER RESEARCH

David (Liam) Cheatwood was diagnosed with Acute B-Cell Lymphoblastic Leukemia on April 30th, 2021, at the tender age of 2 years old. ALL is the most common type of cancer in children. It affects certain cells in the immune system, called B cells and T cells. This disease starts in your child's bone marrow, which is the spongy center of bones where new blood cells grow. The leukemia cells grow very rapidly and crowd the bone marrow, so the marrow has trouble making enough normal cells. Children with this type of cancer may bleed or bruise more easily than usual, suffer severe constipation, feel very tired, lose their appetite, suffer bone or joint pain and often have red or purple spots called petechiae on the skin. If the cancer cells travel to your child's liver and spleen, these organs can grow large enough to make the belly swell. The 5-year survival rate for children under 20 years of age is 89%.

Liam was experiencing severe constipation so I took him to see his pediatrician. Never did I think within hours of testing I would be told my son has cancer. I was completely overwhelmed and felt like I had been hit by a ton of bricks. His port was placed 2 days after his diagnosis and he began chemotherapy that same day. It is difficult watching him go through chemotherapy knowing I cannot do anything to make him feel better. He has been such a little

warrior and full of smiles, even when his treatments make him feel bad. He also has Down Syndrome and has had quite the life so far. I am so proud to be his Mommy but am heartbroken that my sweet boy has to endure such adversity. He deserves to be living a happy healthy life, but cancer does not care about our children. Cancer is an ugly disease and does not care who it affects.

This year in the United States, an estimated 10,470 children under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with childhood cancer. It is also estimated that 1,050 deaths from cancer will occur this year in children under age 15. After accidents, cancer remains the second leading cause of death by disease in children. Those that survive the 5-year survival rate have an 8 times greater mortality rate due to the increased risk for reoccurrence of the original cancer or of the secondary cancer. Sadly, 1 out of 6 children with cancer in the United States do not survive five years. Even with a more “curable” diagnosis, too many children do not have access to the medical care they need. Without treatment, cancer is the same exact death sentence that it was before modern medicine.

Liam is now on protocol 1731 standard risk B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia. This is a study to investigate Blinatumomab in combination with chemotherapy. He has had 12 lumbar punctures and a port replacement. He has had a couple of long hospital stays as well. One of which was in the hospital for 56 days. Due to his Down Syndrome, Liam reacts differently to medications. He has been in remission since day 28, but as a parent you still have the constant fear that there will be a relapse and everything will start all over again. More needs to be done for these children fighting for their lives. I am very passionate about advocating for childhood cancer awareness and I will not stop until a cure is found. There are far too many parents burying their children. Too many families suffering because of financial distress due to all the traveling to get the best care for their children. The medications alone are meant for adults, but there are no other alternatives to treatments for children.

The federal government is allocating an unfathomable 4% for federal funding for childhood cancer research. This is hardly enough to make a difference. 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. This will give researchers a higher percentage of funds to do more testing to potentially find a vaccine for childhood cancer. This would help decrease the time these children will have to fight this vicious disease. This is why it is crucial that we see the 4% federal funding rise to 8%, but we cannot do this alone. We need 12 million signatures to advance to the next. Please sign and share this petition so that these children can finally have a fighting chance at a normal life.

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