



PETITION TO INCREASE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER RESEARCH

Taya Soto was diagnosed on October 18th, 2021 with B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia. B-cell ALL is the most common form of cancer found in children. This type of cancer is fast-spreading. It is a type of leukemia that causes you to have immature white blood cells, known as B-cell lymphoblasts, in your bloodstream and bone marrow. From there they can spread to other organs in your body. Sometimes a child with this specific kind of cancer shows no symptoms or has normal blood work even a few weeks or months before the diagnosis. The risk for development is highest in children younger than 5 years of age. The 5-year relative survival rate for B-cell ALL is 68.8%.

Taya was a sweet little girl with the biggest and most beautiful brown eyes. She brought so much joy to our lives. She started experiencing high fevers in September and did not seem to be feeling herself. We took her to the emergency room and we were quickly directed to the Children's hospital in Madera, CA for her to be seen there. Blood work was immediately done but when the tests came back, they found nothing. We were then sent back home with no answers other than the doctors thinking it could be leukemia. Imagine the fear we felt and not

having any answers was even worse. Within a few weeks she began feeling sick again and developed a fever. We took her back to the children's hospital immediately and more blood work was done. When the tests came back, doctors found leukemia in her blood. She was immediately admitted to the hospital and began chemotherapy.

On October 27th, 2021 we celebrated Taya's 2nd birthday in the hospital. We tried the best we could to make it a happy day to celebrate her. In true Taya fashion we had cake, balloons and presents galore. She was able to smile even though she was not feeling well. That was the warrior in our sweet daughter. Three days later on October 30th she was not feeling well and as her father, I wanted to comfort her. I picked her up and held her in my arms. As I watched her, she closed her big brown eyes but did not wake back up. The doctors did all they could to revive her but her pulse continued to fade until she was gone. My precious Taya slipped away in my arms and I cannot and will not ever forget that feeling of such emptiness. We are forever broken and knew right then our lives would never be the same without her here with us. We ache for her, for her brother and for ourselves. Cancer robbed us of so much but cancer does not care. It took our beautiful daughter from us and it is robbing so many other families of the same.

Every 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. On average, about 16% of children die within 5 years of diagnosis. Among those children who survive to five years from diagnosis, 18% of them will die within the 25 years. Childhood cancer are killing more children in America than any other disease. Some cancers are still functionally incurable. Even with a more "curable" diagnosis, too many children in the U.S. do not have access to the medical care they need. Without proper treatment, cancer is essentially the same death sentence that it was before modern medicine. It is for that reason we need to find a cure and why I am so passionate about doing all I can to help spread awareness about this vicious disease.

At this time, the federal government is only allocating a mere 4% for funding for childhood cancer awareness. Clearly this is not nearly enough. The percentage needs to be increased to 8% for proper research. The signing of this petition will help facilitate the lobbying and passing of a healthcare policy or law that grants a higher percentage of national resources to childhood cancer research. This will allow researchers more funding to be able to do more studies and possibly find better treatments or even a childhood cancer vaccine. We are in need of 12 million signatures so that we can begin lobbying to raise that percentage to 8%. It takes a village and we need your help. These children along with their families deserve to be heard. Please join us by signing and sharing this petition.

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