

Chairman Hawkins and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee:

I urge you to support House Bill 2369 in honor of my sister, Leigh Ann Twombly, who died from melanoma after years of indoor tanning.

Leigh Ann Twombly
May 24, 1965 – July 24, 2014

Leigh Ann was a fair-skinned, blue-eyed girl with blonde hair. She had a huge smile that was only dwarfed by the size of her caring and giving heart. She was as beautiful on the inside as she was on the outside. Ironically, she chose a profession in cosmetology that promoted physical beauty, yet it was not beauty that mattered most to her. What mattered to her was the customers she served. Anyone who met her or entered her hair salon quickly became aware of her smile, fun-loving personality and big heart. She listened to them, laughed and cried with them and above all cared for them. She cherished her husband, Scott, and four children, Seth Andrew, Cameron Scott, Luke Michael and Scotti Ann. She had a love of God, family and life that she passed on to each of them in the way she sang, danced, and acted silly. She cared and loved her family and her God with every ounce of her being.

Leigh Ann was a small town girl, growing up with her three sisters on the family farm. With a young life in the country came a lot of time playing and working outside in the sunlight. Like other teenagers at the time, tanning was part of our everyday lives. Spending time at the pool and sunbathing was a common past time. When tanning beds were introduced to our hometown, we all began using them to work on tans for special events or to have tanned legs for our cheerleading uniforms. We felt that we looked better tan. Eventually Leigh Ann incorporated tanning bed services into her salon business. With the tanning beds in a non-enclosed area of the salon, she was exposed to UV rays at any given time. She ran her salon business for more than 20 years constantly being exposed to UV rays both directly and indirectly. We had no idea how dangerous indoor tanning devices were. Our only caution was to be careful about the length of time we spent in the tanning bed for fear we might burn.

Leigh Ann had a beautiful singing voice. She shared a piece of her heart every time she sang. It made us smile and brought us peace. It was tradition for her to sing, "Was it a Morning Like This" by Sandi Patti at each sunrise service on Easter morning. On Easter Sunday in 2012, Leigh Ann was celebrating with her family just like every Easter before, but she had a headache that she could not get rid of. It got stronger in intensity until she told her husband she could no longer stand the pain. For several weeks prior to that day, she began having visual disturbances, memory lapses, and periods of confusion. I'm sure that these incidences concerned her but she didn't want to worry her family so she had not shared the episodes with

anyone. Upon admission to the hospital that Easter day, the doctors told her that the headache was due to a hemorrhaging mass on her brain. After a full battery of tests, she was diagnosed with stage 4 melanoma cancer of unknown origin. Strangely, there was no external area of visible skin cancer. It was then that we learned the cancer had spread to one of her lungs and to her brain. The area on her lung was deemed un-operable. She quickly underwent neurosurgery to remove the mass on her brain. Throughout her fight with melanoma cancer she endured two brain surgeries, frequent removal of epidermal areas of cancer cells secondary to oral chemotherapy medications, radiation, and infusion chemotherapy. Her treatments required many trips back and forth to KU Med from her home in Highland, KS, 1½ hours away.

When Aunt Leigh Ann was nearing death, I said to my son, Samuel, “I know it’s hard for us to understand why God would take someone he loves so much to heaven at a young age but I’m sure He has a reason.” And Sam said, “Oh He does mom. It’s so that we can find a cure for cancer.” At that moment, I made a vow that I would spend the rest of my life - however long or short - working with others touched by cancer and fighting for a cure. Had we known what we know today about UV rays, I am confident that we would have chosen to use sunblock when in the sun and we would have avoided tanning beds. Leigh Ann’s children, now young adults entering the work force and completing college degrees, have missed her tremendously. What we all would trade for another day of singing, dancing and laughter with Leigh Ann. I am able to find comfort in knowing that she would have wanted us to share her story with others. To educate everyone on the danger of tanning beds and UV exposure and along the way, tell them that Jesus loves them!

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