

Testimony for SB315

I'm Heidi Feyerherm-Smith and I am the founder and president of the Love, Chloe Foundation. I started this organization in memory of my 7-year-old daughter, Chloe, who battled DIPG (Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma) for 11 months. The words "Your child has cancer" changed my life forever. DIPG has a 2-year survival of about 10% and a 5-year survival of less than 1%. The treatment for this cancer is limited and offers little hope for families. I was determined to make a difference for other families by creating the Love, Chloe Foundation. Our mission is to provide financial assistance to Kansas families that have a child diagnosed with cancer, support the Monkey In My Chair program to help kids stay connected with their peers while they are away from school, and also to fund ground-breaking research for childhood cancer.



We understand that families in Kansas are faced with the burden of traveling many miles to get to a children's hospital for treatment for their child. We are able to offer these families financial assistance during these difficult times. We hope to be able to expand our support for these Kansas families with the proceeds from this license plate.

The Monkey In My Chair program is a program that we started in memory of Chloe and her love of monkeys and school. We partner with The Cure Starts Now Foundation to provide this wonderful program to children across the United States. This program provides the family with a large stuffed monkey that can attend school while their child is away for treatment. The monkey fills the child's seat in the classroom and keeps them connected with their peers during this time. The monkey kit also includes a children's book, journal, photo album, backpack, teacher companion and a few other items. The children's book creates a way for the teacher to talk about the situation and allow the children to ask questions and talk about what the situation. Having a classmate with cancer can be scary and creating a positive way to deal with it benefits the entire class. The impact of the Monkey in My Chair program is not only seen with the child and their classroom, but it can have a positive impact on the entire school.

We are also able to fund ground breaking research through the Love, Chloe Foundation. We work with other foundations through the DIPG Collaborative to fund research. We put our research dollars together to make a bigger impact and eliminate duplication of funding. We are able to share one Medical Advisory Council to review and recommend grant funding. As a parent of a child who fought childhood cancer, I know how important it is to bring awareness to this horrible disease. I know that by having this distinctive plate, it will bring much needed awareness in Kansas as well as anywhere our supporters travel. The funds brought in from this plate will be designated to our Fueling the Fight initiative that will fund gas cards for Kansas families with a child with cancer. The support for this plate has been amazing. We shared about our efforts and this bill on our Facebook page and were able to receive more than 1100 signatures of support within a few weeks. There are 100s of families impacted by childhood cancer and this plate will give them a great way to support the cause.