TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND

1859

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2927

March 1, 2023

Thank you, Chair Nosse, Vice-Chair Goodwin. For the record, I am Travis Nelson – the State Representative for House District 44 and a Registered Nurse. Committee members, I am here today in support of House Bill 2927. I would like to thank Pastor Marcia Taylor for her extraordinary work and dedication to bring attention and help to those suffering from Sickle Cell Disease.

As a nurse and a Black man, I care deeply about those impacted by sickle cell. Addressing Sickle Cell Disease is personal to me and my community. One in every 365 African Americans are born with Sickle Cell Disease, and a person with sickle cell has a drastically lower life expectancy of just 40 years, as opposed to the national average of 75 years. Many people living with sickle cell are under-served and receive care mostly in emergency room settings, which is not the ideal treatment place for this chronic disease. Each year in Oregon, between 159-180 children are born with Sickle Cell Disease, and on the West Coast, Oregon's numbers are only surpassed by Washington. One in every 13 Black newborns have Sickle Cell Trait, meaning that they can pass on the disease to any children they may have. This disease is pervasive and we need to elevate research and treatment options, rather than letting people suffer in silence.

We need research and further help for those in Oregon who are living with this chronic, debilitating disease. Many people struggle with the economic weight that comes with having Sickle Cell, as well as its effects on their mental health. Many people suffer in isolation and undiagnosed, not knowing of the resources available to them – connections to doctors, treatments, group support, therapists, and financial resources. We need a more coordinated effort to address this disease as it affects all areas of a person's life, not just their physical health. It is imperative that we address these disparities and provide equitable resources and solutions for those impacted by sickle cell. A Statewide Steering Committee on Sickle Cell Disease would do just that.

Affordable, targeted health care is a necessity to improve the quality of life for everyone in our state. Health care is proactive and disease preventative, and access to health care saves lives and increases our overall well-being. People living with sickle cell need access to care that encompasses all aspects of treatment, including diagnostics, treatment, counseling, financial and group therapy support, and more. We need a Statewide Steering Committee to conduct research and develop a more holistic treatment plan that includes all these areas. Such a committee would help improve the quality of life for Oregonians living with sickle cell and make recommendations on how the health care system can better serve the community and ease the burden of sickle cell on both patient and provider. I would like to thank folks at the Sickle Cell Foundation of Oregon for bringing forward this concept. You will hear more from them shortly.

I urge you to pass HB 2927. Thank you.

Thank you,

Travis Nelson

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland