

Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, SC 29201

The Honorable Nikki Haley,

First, I want to sincerely thank you for declaring September as Childhood Cancer Awareness month in the state of South Carolina. "Your child has cancer." Imaginably, the four worst words any parent could ever hear. Unfortunately 46 families are told those words every single day. In addition, seven families lose their child to cancer daily. Those numbers are too big.

Do you know what numbers are too small? The number of drugs created to treat childhood cancers in the last twenty years. There have only been two. The reason so few drugs have been created to treat children with cancer is partly due to the fact that pharmaceutical companies do not find those drugs profitable. Can you really put a price on someone else's life, especially the life of an innocent child?

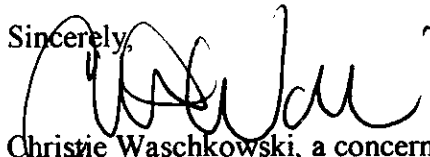
Children with cancer are being treated with drugs that are designed for adult bodies. Their little bodies are injected with toxic chemicals in order to save their lives. The chemo drugs used to treat childhood cancers can have unpleasant side effects such as nausea, vomiting, constipation, loss of appetite, hair loss, tingling in the feet and hands, and many more, but these drugs can also produce late effects, or long-term effects that will affect the child years down the road. By the time they're 45, more than 95% of survivors will have a chronic health problem and 80% will have severe or life-threatening conditions. Late effects include memory loss, poor hand-eye coordination, behavior problems, eyesight issues, hearing loss, damage to the heart and lungs, risk for cavities, infertility, secondary cancers, and emotional issues. Chemotherapy, radiation and surgery can all affect the development of late effects. All three of these procedures are used to treat children with cancer, sometimes all three at once.

Cancer can take away organs, it takes away certain bones, and even whole limbs. It takes away hair. It takes away confidence, security, "normal" and certain aspects of childhood. But we need to stop letting it take away our children. It is time that the government makes our children a priority.

In closing I ask, if your child were struggling with cancer, would you consider 4% of national funding for research to be adequate? My guess is you would respond No! Give our children hope for the future. Restore faith within their families. Alleviate their fear of long term side effects brought on by outdated treatment options. Please consider the need for much needed additional research funding.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Christie Waschkowski, a concerned citizen  
christie.waschkowski@gmail.com