Dear Minnesota Representatives:

My name is Chris Engler. I’m a Lake Elmo resident, retired basketball player, lawyer and teacher. I was diagnosed with als this past May. I then contacted Senator Tomassoni and we have, to my great honor, become friends.

I’m honored to speak to you in absentia today about the importance and criticality of this legislation which supports research leading to therapies, treatments, and eventually cures while also providing support for als caretakers.

For far too long, als has indiscriminately afflicted all segments of our population and communities, including our service veterans. In addition to its devastating and progressive physical effects, als has the daunting challenge and complexity of affecting everyone differently and at different rates, and its precise origins remain unconfirmed, undiscovered, and/or not well understood; and thus, to date, there are less than a handful of FDA approved treatments which have limited efficacy at slowing disease progression. When diagnosed, patients are provided a grim outlook.

However, there is now a palpable sense of hope that als’s long-held secrets could soon be unlocked, thanks to recent momentum with various clinical trials of drugs that have shown promise in one aspect or another. But we’re not there yet. That is why this legislation is so important.

I am sorry my wife Cara and I cannot be present for today’s hearing. The reason my “Cara-taker” and I are not present is because we are in Rochester, at the Mayo Clinic where I am being injected with round 1 of 4 of my stem cells into my spinal fluid to try to beat back my als. How apropos that I testify remotely as I am receiving treatment for als in a clinical trial led by Dr. Nathan Staff while being supported by my wife Cara, my care taker. I believe this represents the very essence and spirit of this legislation. If passed, this bill will put Minnesota in the medical fore yet again. Our state, with its leading healthcare institutions and innovative abilities, is uniquely positioned to meet this als challenge and make a meaningful and profound difference here in Minnesota and far beyond. As Senator Tomassoni said, the future needs to be full of hope that this scourge can finally be conquered. The difference between “care” and “cure” is yo”u”.

If I may be so bold, I urge you today to join your Senate colleagues in unanimously passing this ground-breaking legislation.

Thank you for considering this legislation. Also, thanks to the Minnesota Senate, and of course to Senators Bakk & Tomassoni. Finally, to those of you who have lost loved ones to this scourge, like our friend Kent Hrbek, hope is on the way!!!!