

March 1, 2021

Testimony in support of HF 633
House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

Chair Liebling and members of the committee:

My name is Monica Theis. I live in Robbinsdale and I am a paralegal and mom to two wonderful college girls. I am a 28-year cancer survivor and a volunteer with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

I would like to tell you my story and explain my support for House File 633.

In the summer of 1992, after my freshman year in college, I was diagnosed with stage 3 Hodgkin's lymphoma. In 2004 I was diagnosed with stage 1 breast cancer, in 2011 stage 3 breast cancer, and in 2015 stage 4 metastatic breast cancer, which is currently not curable.

As we all hear, prescription drugs are expensive. My deductible is just over \$5,000. Spread out over a year, \$5,000 may seem doable. But with cancer, you don't get the full year and I have met that deductible within the first month, if not the first week of the year.

In order to get my medication filled from the specialty pharmacy, I must pay up front. My medication costs \$12,000 (for one month) and so I need the full deductible which is \$5,000 for my medication to be released. I empty my accounts and put the rest on my credit card. This wasn't ibuprofen I needed, it's cancer medicine.

I have something not all cancer patients do – an employer that asks me what my health insurance needs are every year. My employer gives employees a lump sum every year to either put towards a plan on the individual market or a small group plan. If I decided to switch over to the individual market, this bill would mean that there would be plans available to me to better manage my prescription drug costs.

What I appreciate most about HF 633 is that if people like me need options, and this bill gives us options. If you don't want or need this type of prescription drug benefit, you don't have to buy it, and it doesn't hurt you a bit. But – if you're someone like me who is living with cancer or another chronic disease and need more affordable drug coverage options – this bill gives us options. Cancer is hard, really hard. The financial toxicity makes it even more difficult. This bill can help to alleviate some of this burden so patients can plan for their expenses and focus on their treatment.

Please vote yes on House File 633. Thank you.

Monica Theis
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