

Good afternoon Madam Chair and members of the Committee—

My name is Monica Theis. I live in Robbinsdale and I'm a single mom of two incredible daughters, a 4-time cancer survivor of 2 types of cancer, and volunteer for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.

I'm here today to talk about the importance of clinical trials.

I was first diagnosed with cancer in 1992, as a freshman in college, with stage 3 hodgkins lymphoma. Since that time, I have been diagnosed with breast cancer 3 times, stage 1 in 2004, stage 3 in 2011 and in 2015 I was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic breast cancer. My cancer is terminal. I prefer to say it "currently incurable". With advancements in medicine, I can continue to live with this as a chronic disease. Cancer research gives me hope and clinical trials are why I am here today.

I've been enrolled in 2 clinical trials, and 2 of my medications in the last 5 years were very recently approved through trials when they became available to me. When diagnosed with cancer, your options for lines of treatment are presented to you and often, the list is smaller than what you'd like to imagine. When my oncologist was discussing my treatment options with me, she introduced clinical trials as an option from the very beginning. There are only so many approved drugs available to a patient and so to have access to clinical trials is essential. Trials provide survivors with more treatment options and not only are participants getting access to cutting edge drugs, but they are also a part of advancing research. It is only with clinical trials that we can develop new drugs and work toward cures. With clinical trials as part of our treatment plans, we are given more time to be with our families, a part of our communities and have a good quality of life. We are also given a lot of hope and inspiration.

I am living proof that research and clinical trials are important. I have a plan through my employer and my insurer covers routine costs associated with a clinical trial. That same coverage of routine costs exists for Minnesotans on Medicare, but it is not covered for those on Medicaid. Why wouldn't we extend the same benefit to the 18% of Minnesotans on Medicaid? All Minnesotans should have the same opportunity to participate in a clinical trial without having to consider the burden of not having their routine costs covered. These costs would be covered if not on a trial and so why would we exclude that coverage simply because a patient's treatment is a clinical trial.

You can help make sure today that cancer patients, whether they face a stage 1 or a stage 4 diagnosis, are on a commercial plan or on Medicaid, have all the tools they need to defeat the disease. We look to you to help us continue to hold on to our hope and continue to have access to all care available to us.

Please vote yes on House File 3026 and remove barriers to clinical trials for all Minnesotans. Thank you.