

Good morning. My name is Erica Souter. I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to share my story today in support of this license plate.

Our family's journey with pediatric cancer began when my daughter Jayden was diagnosed at the age of 3. She had a very rare form of Wilms Tumor, which is a tumor in your kidney. Just like my Jay, her diagnosis was never "typical". We fought alongside her for 2 ½ years, but unfortunately in 2011, at the age of 5, she earned her angels' wings.

Shortly after she passed away, my husband and I decided we wanted to give back. We had a great support system around us throughout Jayden's journey, but we noticed so many did not. A pediatric cancer diagnosis fundamentally changes your life. I had to close my business so I could be her care provider. I stayed by her side through months of hospital stays, procedures, appointments, etc, while my husband worked, a lot of times from the hospital. Even though my husband had a good job, we had to file bankruptcy due to medical and other debts. At this time we realized there were so many other families that could use help during their own child's journey.

In 2012 we began BabyJay's Legacy of Hope, a 501c(3) charitable organization based out of Lawrence, that assists families during their pediatric cancer journey. We are committed to helping families with all the things that health insurance does not cover, such as rent, utilities, car payments, groceries, clothes, school fees, etc. To date, we have granted almost \$200,000 to families across Kansas.

When your child is diagnosed with cancer, all of these costs start to add up. Close to 50% of these families have a parent/guardian that has to quit their job to be the child's full time caretaker. This enormous financial strain can cause a high level of additional stress, which in turn raises the divorce rate and financial burden among these families. BabyJay's Legacy of Hope strives to relieve some of the financial and emotional stress, to allow the family to focus on their child's treatment and their family during this difficult journey.

I wanted to share with you our story today, because this license plate program would help provide gas cards and other much needed financial support to organizations like ours, that help kids and their families across Kansas fighting this horrible disease. A large portion of the families we assist are already in financial need, and then they are told their child has been diagnosed with cancer. This program would help us, along with other pediatric cancer organizations in the state, reach out and "wrap" these kids and their families in support.

In these tough times in our country, and in our state, I ask that you help us provide HOPE to these families along their child's journey. As we say at BabyJay's.....Because Kids Get cancer too.

Thank You for your time today.