

February 27, 2025

Representative Susan R. Donovan

Chair, House Health and Human Services Committee

State House

Providence, RI 02903

RE: In Support of H 7537

Dear Chairwoman Donovan:

In November 2024 I was diagnosed with Stage 3 ovarian/peritoneal cancer. Needless to say, my whole world turned upside down. All I could think of was how was I going to deal with all the information coming my way and how was I going to survive this terrible diagnosis.

Before beginning chemotherapy treatments, prior to my surgery, the nurses at the RI Hospital Cancer Institute gave me information regarding scalp cooling. I will be honest with you; I quickly brushed it off thinking that my hair was the last thing I had to concern myself with. Most of my life my hair was something I was proud of, but at that moment all I could think of was surviving cancer. How I wish I could go back and change my decision to use a cooling cap. Exactly 14 days after my first chemo treatment, my hair began falling out in large clumps. My scalp was so painful that eventually I asked my hairdresser to cut it all off. We both cried as she was cutting.

Losing my hair was a loss I find hard to explain. I not only lost my hair, but I lost my self. Each and every time I looked in the mirror, I asked myself "Who is this person?" I became a stranger. When people say hair is "just an accessory", do not believe them. While I was in the fight of my life, I had to deal with self-consciousness and self-loathing. I truly missed who I was both physically and emotionally pre-cancer diagnosis.

I am happy and so very grateful that I am now in remission and my hair is finally returning after a year. This has been a surreal experience to say the least.

I am asking for your support of this very important legislation, particularly during the ever-growing cancer epidemic.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Donna M. DiPalma

Cc: Members of House Health and Human Services Committee & Sponsoring Representatives