

Written Testimony to Support House Bill 2031 / Senate Bill 15

February 6, 2019

I served the City of Lenexa, KS for 21 years as a firefighter. After over two decades of service to my community, I retired in 2009. Prior to my time with the City of Lenexa, I also worked for two years at the Lawrence Fire Department in Lawrence, KS. Since my 2009 retirement from the fire service, I have taken on an additional job working at a rail yard in Kansas City. This post-retirement job was necessary in order to both supplement my retirement income and to continue receiving health insurance coverage.

In Spring 2018, I began experiencing short-term memory issues, which prompted me to see my doctor. I was referred to Shawnee Mission Medical Center (Now AdventHealth Shawnee Mission) Emergency Department. An MRI revealed the cause of my symptoms: a brain tumor. After spending a few days in the hospital, which included a procedure to retrieve tissue from the tumor for biopsy, I learned that my symptoms had been the result of a stage 4 cancerous tumor called a Glioblastoma — the most aggressive form of primary brain tumor. I also learned that, due to the location of the tumor, the preferred primary treatment — surgery — would not be possible. My treatment instead has consisted of chemotherapy and radiation, as well as experimental electrical stimulation therapy.

Because of my brain tumor, I am no longer able to drive a vehicle. Driving was a central duty of my job with the railroad. Therefore, due to my brain tumor, I am no longer able to work the job that supplemented my retirement income. The health insurance provided by the railroad will run out soon, forcing me to cover my own premiums, right at a time when my cancer care, medical expenses, and absence of extra income are adding up.

According to the Firefighter Cancer Support Network (<https://www.firefighterclose-calls.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/FF-Cancer-Fact-Sheet.pdf>), fire fighters have a 1.31 times greater change of developing brain cancer of some type. There was no data found specifically for my type of brain tumor, though the Glioblastoma is the most common type of primary brain tumor.

Harold Sielert
Retired Firefighter
Lenexa Fire Department