

Hello all,

My name is Mason Lough, and I am from Wellington.

Before I begin, I have a challenge for you. Close your eyes. Imagine yourself in biology class. There is a test over cell division today and you are nervous about it. You haven't been able to sleep the whole week because of how worried you are about it. You are handed your test but you absolutely cannot concentrate because some invisible force is telling you to tense up your neck so hard that it gets sore. You look up at the clock and see that only ten minutes remain in the class. You go back to working on the test but again that invisible force returns. This time it directs your attention to the misaligned desks in front of you, and all you can think about is how those desks need to be straightened up. The bell rings and the teacher collects your half-finished test. Now open your eyes and imagine living in that world every day. It may be hard for you to picture, but the situation described above highlights only some of the struggles I have faced basically my whole life.

The biggest challenge I have ever overcome is one that will never go away. I have Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcus bacteria (PANDAS) and some days it truly drives me insane. Its symptoms include tics, anxiety, OCD, sleep issues, and a host of other problems. Personally, my worst symptoms were tics and OCD. In fact, my OCD was so debilitating that for years I could not function unless I did everything in groups of four. If I ever tapped on anything with my hands, it had to be 4 times. I had to have the TV and radio volumes at multiples of four at all times, and I even had to count the syllables in my sentences and add words until they added up to a multiple of four.

My tics were also very debilitating at one point. In elementary school, I had a vocal tic where I would shout a random word as loud as I could. This tic became so severe that I had teachers telling me to cover my mouth and leave the room during class. This tic was at its worst when I was only 8 years old. Just try and picture how furious you might be if your 8 year old was kicked out of class for something they could not control.

I still suffer from some tics, mostly facial contortions, due to long-term damage from being misdiagnosed and mistreated with various other disorders. I did not receive the correct diagnosis of PANDAS until I was nearly 15. However, shortly after that diagnosis, I was lucky enough to be a part of study on intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) treatment and PANDAS in Omaha, Nebraska. This treatment was life changing and dramatically helped my condition. I come to you all with the hope that individuals in Kansas may be able to receive this treatment without having to carry the financial burden of doing so. While I was fortunate enough to be a part of this study, that is certainly not the case for the vast majority of kids with this condition.

In light of that, I am asking the Kansas Senate to vote in favor of the HB2110 pilot program. Although I believe that this disease has made me stronger than the average person, and has taught me the real meaning of perseverance by forcing me to work my way through whatever is put in front of me, I would not wish anyone the same path it has forced me to walk. Though I have gone far beyond what is expected of me to reach a full-ride scholarship and even a spot in a Division I marching band, I don't think any other children in Kansas suffering from this disease should have to persevere as

much as I have had to. By voting for this pilot plan, you are voting for the futures of thousands of kids in our great state.

With that all being said I will leave you all with one final question. What if my story was your child's story?

Thank you.