

Hello. In case you don't remember me from last year, my name is Lucas. I am now 11 years old and in fifth grade. Last year, I spoke about wondering why kids with my autoimmune disease are being denied by insurance companies for the needed treatments such as IVIG and Rituximab in the state of Maryland. To this day, I am still wondering why Maryland does not have a mandate to help kids like me when other states have passed or are passing legislation.

Now, a lot has happened to me since last year. Last year, when I spoke to this committee, I had not had IVIG treatment. Well, I became more severe with my symptoms. I have now had IVIG treatments that have saved my life. Why do I say this? Because IVIG has made my symptoms almost completely disappear. For example, I ended up missing the entire fourth grade school year. I had to have a teacher come to my house to teach me. My separation anxiety, anger, aggression, OCD thoughts, concentration, and school refusal was so severe I could not even leave my house. Now, after IVIG treatments, I love going to school, seeing my friends, and doing the best that I can. I am not angry or aggressive any longer.

So, I know that these treatments work. I am a prime example of what can happen with proper diagnosis and aggressive treatments. Which is why I am here again today asking the state of Maryland to mandate insurance companies to pay for treatments. I am here to be the voice of all my PANDAS/PANS friends that are not able to speak today. We need help, we need doctors, and we need legislators to mandate insurance companies to pay for treatments.

Lastly, what I dislike the most, is being told by doctors and insurance

companies that this disease isn't real or that there isn't enough evidence and studies that prove treatments work. Well, I have to say, no one invited my family or me to participate in their studies. I also had a

Lucas' Testimony Copy of his speech

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pediatrician tell my sister that this disease wasn't "really a thing" and it made her cry. Why did she cry? Because this doctor had no idea what life has been like for our family going through this. It makes me extremely sad and confused that someone like a doctor who is to be respected said that to my little sister. And I am really tired of hearing my PANDAS/PANS friends struggle to get coverage of the treatments I KNOW work. Insurance companies are denying these treatments and families cannot afford to pay out of pocket for the expensive treatments that do work.

Please consider passing House Bill 447. Thank you for your time.

Lucas, Age 11, PANDAS
child