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January 22, 2024

Testimony

Good afternoon,

My name is Michelle Fiori. I am a teacher, a business owner, a wife, and a mother of two young boys. My family has been raised in the Maine outdoors. We hunt, fish, forage, and grow most of our food, because we have the luxury of living in the great state of Maine. So you can imagine how these activities could have come to a halt with a simple medical diagnosis. Labor Day weekend in 2022, my 8 year old son was diagnosed with leukemia and spent the next 3 months in and out of the hospital, fighting for his life. My husband and I were by his side for all of this while bouncing between our home in Readfield with our youngest son and extensive stays and Barbara Bush Children's Hospital. My son Aiden had to learn how to walk again, while going through intensive chemotherapy. Today, I am happy to report he is doing well and thriving while he continues through his chemotherapy treatments.

Weeks before the diagnosis, Aiden was fishing and target practicing with his step-father, getting ready to take his hunter's safety course. He eagerly wants to be a part of this outdoor community; a part of this outdoor Maine heritage.

We can estimate that the average hunter has roughly 50-60 years to enter the moose hunt lottery. We also know about 50,000 people apply each year; and ultimately the chances of getting your name pulled from the lottery is pretty low. Let's be honest, those chances are potentially even lower for children who are critically ill. A journal published from the National Library of Medicine states that children diagnosed with leukemia have a 10-40% chance of relapse, "which remains the most common cause of treatment failure, and these patients are more likely to die." My son, and other critically ill children in the state of Maine may not have 50-60 years to enter the moose lottery.

We currently give 6 permits to Disabled Vets; I would ask you nice folks to take a look at increasing the number of permits from 2 to 5 for this small group of children, who would like this experience. Setting aside a small amount of permits for the Maine moose lottery, would be mutually beneficial for both the child and the State. It would continue to promote the outdoor Maine heritage, while providing a once in a lifetime opportunity to a child that could use a little hope in their lives. Thank you for hearing my testimony this afternoon,

Reference:

1. National Institute of Health
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9924329/#:~:text=Various%20studies%20have%20reported%20relapse,Olbara%20et%20al.%2C%202021%3B>