

# UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

## Women's Basketball

### 2006 NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

April 21, 2011

Dear Congressman Cummings,

I hope this communication finds you doing well. As always, I want to thank you for the support you've offered our terrific university, as well as me personally. We take great pride in wearing "Maryland" across our uniform and strive to represent our state the best way possible.

This is the first time I've ever been moved to write you or anyone in a similar position. What triggered this letter really is a matter of life and death. It's explained more in an article in the Washington Post on April 18, 2011 entitled "When the drug you need to cure cancer is nowhere to be found". It's an article I find disgraceful and heartbreaking on every level. Link: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health/when-the-drug-you-need-to-cure-a-cancer-is-nowhere-to-be-found/2011/04/11/APH802zd\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health/when-the-drug-you-need-to-cure-a-cancer-is-nowhere-to-be-found/2011/04/11/APH802zd_story.html)

The point of the article is that there is a shortage of a crucial drug (cytarabine) used in the treatment of leukemia. To get to the point, without cytarabine, many leukemia patients won't be cured and will die. What makes this hit home even more for me and my family is that my three year old son Tyler is a leukemia patient who has benefited from cytarabine. We are lucky that some of the drug was available for him to receive at the time his treatments called for it. Even with that good fortune, it makes me feel outraged that other families are being told that this vital drug isn't available.

From what I understand, the shortage isn't the result of a lack of natural resources or research dollars, but simply a choice by pharmaceutical companies because their profit margin on the drug isn't high enough. This is wrong on every level and I don't want to believe it is allowed to happen.

Time is critical in this matter because lives are hanging in the balance. I urge you to bring the pharmaceutical companies before congress to expedite a resolution and explain their sorry and shameful business practices. Moreover, they should have to address leukemia patients and their families, who have seen their living hell get worse and have quite literally been issued a death sentence by the pharmaceutical companies.

To use the vernacular of our sport, solving this problem is a lay-up and everyone wins. I know there is a workable solution to this inexcusable, marginalizing of human lives. My family and I have first hand experience that the medical teams in places like Maryland's own Johns Hopkins are incredible. My son Tyler wouldn't be alive today if they didn't have access to the drugs that rid his body of cancer. Because of that, I feel incredibly passionate about making sure every other patient has the best possible chance to beat cancer too.

Time is running out on people who must have cytarabine to defeat leukemia. Please take action. If you need more info, there are brilliant people at Hopkins that can be great resources to you. I recommend reaching out to Dr. Pat Brown [REDACTED] Head of Pediatric Leukemia or Dr. Ken Cohen, Clinical Director of Pediatric Oncology [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time and Go Maryland!

Best Regards,

*Brenda Freese*

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