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Statement for the Record from Rep. Jennifer Wexton (VA-10)
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
Enhancing Public Health: Legislation to Protect Children and Families
October 20, 2021

I would like to start by thanking Chairwoman Eshoo, Ranking Member Guthrie, and all of the members of the subcommittee for providing this opportunity to testify in strong support of an important, bipartisan bill - the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0.

As many of you know, cancer is the number one cause of disease-related death in children age 14 and younger. This year alone, it's estimated that more than 10,000 children in the U.S. under the age of 15 will be diagnosed with cancer. In addition, one in 33 babies born in the U.S. are affected by a birth defect, and birth defects are the leading cause of death among infants.

Unfortunately, these childhood diseases are still poorly understood, and additional funding is greatly needed to augment existing research to promote new discoveries for children affected by them.

Congress took the first steps towards addressing this crucial problem for families across the country by passing the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act in 2014 to uncover new insights into the biology of childhood disease. The law established a Ten-Year Pediatric Research Initiative Fund within the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Common Fund and authorized \$12.6 million in funds annually for pediatric disease research through the Gabriella Miller Kids First Pediatric Research Program, commonly known as Kids First.

Since this time, the Kids First program has made significant progress towards understanding childhood cancer and disease. It has sequenced more than 20,000 samples from childhood cancer and structural birth defect cohorts and initiated the Gabriella Miller Kids First Data Resource Center—a comprehensive data resource for research and patient communities meant to advance discoveries.

The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0 builds off the important progress made by the 2014 law by providing a new source of funding for the Kids First Research Fund. The bill would specifically redirect civil monetary sanctions levied against pharmaceutical, medical device, supplement, and cosmetic manufacturers by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission for violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. By diverting penalties from these companies that break the law, the bill would sustain Kids First's critical childhood disease research for generations to come.

I introduced this legislation earlier this year in honor of my constituent Gabriella Miller who passed away at 10-years-old from an inoperable brain tumor. Gabriella, who would have turned 18 this year, was a fierce advocate for childhood cancer research and changed the lives of countless other young children battling these illnesses. I am very pleased that Gabriella's mother and my constituent, Ellyn Miller, is here today to testify. Ellyn has been a champion for this crucial work and has continued Gabriella's brave and important advocacy.

No family should have to go through what the Miller family did. As Members of Congress, it is our responsibility to ensure that our nation's children will have a fighting chance to survive cancer and other rare diseases. I urge you to join me in reaffirming Congress' commitment to finding treatments and cures for pediatric diseases and vote yes on the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act 2.0.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Wexton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress