

**Testimony by**

**Natalie Stanback**

**JDRF Volunteer and Parent of a Child with Type 1 Diabetes**

**At the hearing entitled:**

**“What’s Fueling the Diabetes Epidemic?”**

**Thursday, December 14, 2023, at 10 a.m.**

**Before the**

**United States Senate**

**Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions**

**Dirksen Senate Office Building Room 430**

**Washington, D.C.**

Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Dr. Cassidy, Members of the Committee – thank you for inviting me to testify today. I'm here because, unfortunately, I'm deeply familiar with the many challenges presented by type 1 diabetes - T1D. I don't have this disease, but my eleven-year-old daughter, Nadia, lives with it.

My brother died from complications from T1D when he was only 24 years old so you can imagine the fear I felt when Nadia was diagnosed at the age of 3. It was overwhelming.

Nadia doesn't know life without diabetes. We are blessed to have access to the best medical care, which helps her live the life she wants to live. She has an insulin pump and a continuous glucose monitor. She plays soccer and runs track. She looks like a normal kid, and, in most ways, she is.

But diabetes is always there 365 days a year 24/7. This disease is hard. We're a very emotionally positive family – definitely glass half full. But this disease is hard. On all of us, but especially Natalie. She can't eat without calculating how many carbohydrates are in the food to dose the correct amount of insulin. Her blood sugar level can get low during soccer games, which forces her to sit out, treat it, and then get back in the game if there's still time. She has to deal with the needles necessary to change insulin pump infusion sites and glucose monitoring sensors in a way many adults would struggle with. And prescriptions and doctor appointments must be diligently managed.

My daughter is brave, responsible—she is miraculous. But it is still so very hard, every day. And not just for her, but for all those around her.

Her siblings, extended family members, teachers, coaches, friends, friends' parents--everyone needs to understand Nadia's needs and how they can help, especially in case of an emergency.

If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a city to raise a child with diabetes.

I know that the members of this committee are aware of the realities of diabetes and have championed this cause for years. I am grateful. I was honored to chair JDRF's Children's Congress this past summer and I know the amazing delegates and guardians you met are grateful, too.

Having you as champions has helped us get to where we are today. In fact, SPD-supported research directly contributed to the development of the incredible devices that Nadia relies on every day. They could still be years in the future if not for the support of the SDP.

What my daughter, what every parent of a child with diabetes needs, and every person affected by diabetes needs is a cure. Something that removes the thousands of medical decisions we must make every day so that we can focus on everything else in life. For my daughter, that would mean focusing on scoring goals on the soccer field and doing well in school, not whether she will get dangerously low or high blood sugar in the process.

Research can make that happen. The SDP has been foundational to nearly every advance in pursuit of that ultimate goal: cures.

I am excited about the progress in therapies to delay T1D onset in those at risk of developing the disease. Anyone who is able to take advantage of delaying T1D onset is receiving an incredible gift—time without T1D. I wish that Nadia could have had that opportunity.

I do believe that, someday, Nadia will receive the ultimate gift - life without T1D. We have made incredible progress towards curing T1D through cell therapies. This research is happening right now. I don't know when she will get that gift—no one does—but I do know the best way to bring that day closer is long-term, sustained funding of the Special Diabetes Program. This research must continue.

As a mom, I don't want my daughter to face a lifetime with diabetes. With SDP-funded research, I know cures are possible. I know a life free of insulin pumps and monitors and the looming threat of complications is on the horizon—but only if the brilliant minds who have gotten us this far have the resources, they need to get us across the finish line.

And until then, we need affordable insulin. The INSULIN Act would help make that more of a reality. I urge your support.

Thank you very much for your time and I look forward to your questions.