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Chairman Townsend, Members of the committee, for the record my name is Gil Robison.

April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1993, is the day I will always think of as black Monday. It is the day I was diagnosed with colon cancer. Lying on the table, I thought it odd when my doctor asked me how old I was. I told him I was 39, and when he just shook his head, I knew that something was wrong. When I asked him what was going on, he told me I had a tumor. I asked him what that meant, and he told me it looked like cancer. Not believing I could have cancer, it really didn't hit me. In disbelief, I asked him if he was sure, he nodded and said he was 98% sure. At that moment, I felt as if I was being given a death sentence and my whole world suddenly started closing in around me. All I could think of was my daughter and the possibility of her growing up without a daddy. I don't think I heard another word my doctor said after that. He wanted to schedule me for surgery the very next day, as the cancer had progressed to stage three. I could only respond by telling him I needed some time to get my things in order. As I walked out of the hospital, I was unaware of anyone around me; it was like I had tunnel vision. I phoned my wife to tell her the news, but when she answered the phone, I choked up and couldn't talk. On the drive home, so much was going through my head, I could barely think. The thought of leaving my daughter, and the financial burden I would put on my family, was almost too much to bear. I had no health insurance, and I began to experience feelings of guilt.

The symptoms had been there for almost two years. Nobody in my family had ever had cancer, so the thought had never entered my mind. Since that time, my mother, my aunt, my uncle, several close friends and three of my dogs have died of cancer - and some say it's a good thing to be a trendsetter. If I had been more educated on the symptoms of cancer, I might have been able to detect it sooner. Dr. Yamamoto had suggested a colonoscopy to me for some time, however the cost was prohibitive, and I didn't have it done until it was too late for early detection. Even now, I try to put this procedure off as long as possible because my insurance will not cover the cost of this preventive measure. Not until recently have I *finally* been able to get health insurance to cover me, at a somewhat reasonable cost.

During my subsequent surgery, they removed approximately six inches of my colon - I guess that would make me a semi colon. They also removed 13 lymph nodes, nine of which were cancerous. Needless to say, my prognosis wasn't very good. My oncologists had given me a 30% chance to survive for the next five years. Not very optimistic, if you were standing in my shoes. It's been almost ten years, and I am still here. Maybe it *is* a good thing to be a trendsetter. Not long after, I was scheduled for radiation five days a week for the following five weeks. Then I would undergo chemotherapy for twelve months.

Because I had no insurance at the time, my medical bills were devastating, topping 150K. I have just recently finished paying them off, nearly ten years later.

The fear of the cancer returning is something that will never go away. However, I am here today, and I am living proof that there are survivors. One of the greatest things I can do is to give back to others what has been given to me. Today, I can be there to support others who have gone, or are going through, what I have experienced. The importance of having support, like I had at the time, from my daughter, and the support I get from my wife, family, friends, and the cancer support group I help facilitate, is some of the best medicine money can't buy!

So as a colon cancer survivor, and volunteer for the American Cancer Society, I ask that you vote to support Senate Bill 183. Early detection can and will save lives, what a great gift your support will be. Thank you!