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RE: SF 450/HF372, SF 834/HF1000, SF 776/HF742

My name is Derek Lowen and I am writing this to talk about my experience with PFAS. In 2004 I started my freshman year at Tartan High School in Oakdale, MN. Upon entry into the school, it wasn't long until I learned of the "cancer kids" there. At Tartan we had the usual social groups like jocks, popular kids, geeks, nerds, and so on; but we also had the cancer kids which stood out among the rest.

In early October 2004 I was diagnosed with a brain tumor roughly the size of a baseball, this was discovered after at least a year of enduring terrible headaches. I was lucky in that I didn't need chemo, but my friends weren't so lucky. My best friend's sister, who lived only a few blocks from me and was diagnosed with leukemia and she luckily survived. But I know or know of several who didn't survive, In 2005 a senior I knew died of leukemia, in 2007 we lost another one. I've lost count of all the victims. But one thing I know that we all have in common is drinking groundwater from within the PFAS chemical plume in the eastern suburbs of the twin cities.

I know my cancer best, so I'll detail what I've gone through. First I had headaches that felt like my eyes were going to explode, this is what prompted me to get the MRI that found the tumor. After discovery I was rushed to children's hospital St. Paul and put on IV steroids to shrink the tumor for easier removal. The tumor was in contact with my cerebellum and the size was one of the largest my neurosurgeon had seen. I was under the knife for I think 9 hours and they were able to remove all of it. Now for the consequences, I have a permanent traumatic brain injury. I have lost nearly all of my memories from before my tumor and still suffer from ongoing memory loss problems. The worst part to me about memory loss is that there are instances when I've made good memories with friends or family, but the memory is blank. For example, my family went to gooseberry falls not long before the tumor was discovered, I was there, I've seen pictures. I don't remember being there though, almost completely blank as the only thing I remember from that day was parts of the drive there. I also have problems with balance and motor skills which will never go away, and to top it off I'm more susceptible to concussions.

Now 3M basically built this area that is true, but because of the settlement with the state over PFAS contamination the public now knows the truth that 3M hid the dangers for 50 years. 3M poisoned our water to save a buck or two. Heck the state settlement with 3M didn't even affect their bottom line. But it was a starting point to at least put that funding into remediating the ongoing chemical exposure to the public. I support these bills in reducing our exposure to PFAS wholeheartedly and I hope for the legislature to support them as well. At least maybe we can hold companies manufacturing PFAS accountable to reduce public exposure, to reduce the victims of these forever chemicals and the companies that manufacture them.