

**Testimony of Melissa Roder-Goldschmidt In Support of H.B. No. 7158, AN ACT
CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN UMBILICAL CORD BLOOD BANK FOR
CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS.**

Before the Public Health Committee

March 14, 2007

First of all I want to thank the committee, the Department of Public Health and the members of the Ad hoc committee in putting forward such a comprehensive report in such an expedient manner all with a genuine excitement and commitment to the issue. My name is Melissa Roder-Goldschmidt, I come before you as a mother, wife and daughter and as a woman who has donated her child's cord blood in 2004.

I commend the Committee and State in making the first step last year by passing legislation to examine the feasibility of establishing a cord blood bank within Connecticut. We may be a small state but with this legislation and the subsequent passage of HB 7158 we have the opportunity to make tremendous strides towards becoming quite powerful within this field. The actual establishment of an in-state public umbilical cord blood bank is worth the commitment and investment.

In May 2001 my mother, Ruth Roder died a tragic, painful but mercifully quick death after a short fought with kidney cancer. Her death was quite tragic in that she was young and vital just 6 months earlier and endured multiple misdiagnoses. What is even worse is that she can never share in the marriage of her children or the birth of her grandchildren and all of the joys that come along with that.

In 2004 I gave birth to my daughter Rachel, who is named after my mom. I had been receiving information on how to pay to store my daughter's cord blood. I choose not to. Instead I looked into what cord blood does and how and what it can help. Kidney cancer is one of the ailments which cord blood research can assist. I then proceeded to find a receptacle that would accept my daughter's blood, I recall contacting the Red Cross, local hospitals etc. all to no avail. I was finally referred to Cyrobanks International in Florida whom I had a marvelous experience with. Of my difficult birthing experience, donating this cord blood was the most simplistic and second most rewarding. My only question was why they were not consulted by the ad hoc committee as they are long established and growing internationally?

Recently I met with numerous OB-GYN's for my personal use and one of the first questions I asked was whether they would be willing to donate their time to harvest our second child's cord blood for donation purposes. Every doctor whom I spoke with undeniably agreed with, and spoke of the importance of cord blood and its future.

My husband recently asked me why this issue was so important to me. I responded by saying that no one person's death should be in vein. If cord blood research and or utilization of this blood could afford my own family or another person in need, the time to witness the joys in one's own life, the very things my mother was cheated of, then why would I stop supporting it?

Thank you for making this investment in our State and residents futures and fully supporting H.B. 7158.

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