

**Thank you for this opportunity to share my story in connection to proposed
bill SB 190.**

My name is John Toomey and I am 38 years old. At the age of seven I was diagnosed with a chronic renal disease. I have been fortunate to receive two kidney transplants.

At the age of eighteen I received my first transplant donated by my twenty-five year-old brother. The year was 1986, and my brother had been living in California for four years where he was working full time and going to school at night. My brother had arranged to get two weeks off from work and school. After purchasing his own plane ticket, my brother arrived in Connecticut on a Friday and the operation was scheduled for the coming Tuesday. We were admitted in to Yale New Haven Hospital on Monday. Later that day we were told that the operation needed to be postponed until my potassium levels were within normal levels. The operation was finally done the following Tuesday, one week later than planned. The doctors explained the procedure to us: My brother and I would go into surgery at the same time. I would be prepped to receive the organ while they were removing the organ from my brother. After removing the organ my brother's surgery would be complete and he would come out of surgery first about two hours before me. Perhaps you could understand my family's worry and concern when I came out of surgery before my brother. Six hours after I had come out of surgery my family was reunited with my brother who had complications with the anesthesia. The hospital policy at the time was to keep the donor and the recipient apart for a few days. This was done because the donor would be in a lot more pain than the recipient due to the

invasiveness of the operation. The staff couldn't enforce this policy; my brother and I refused to be separated.

Not, at least, until my brother had to get back on a plane and fly back to California only three days after surgery. He had an incision line from belly button to spine, dozens of staples, and less one rib. You see, my brother could not afford to purchase another ticket and had to stick with his original flight plan (not to mention his job and school). The next 3 months were very difficult for both my brother and me. I was finally released from the hospital after 12 weeks in which I required a second surgery, and had bouts with rejection and infection. No doubt that his recovery was prolonged by the flight home and his schedule of work and school. He simply could not afford to do it any other way.

Today my brother and I are as inseparable as we were in those days twenty-one years ago. We have made amazing medical and pharmaceutical advances in the past twenty-one years. Were this operation to take place today, my story would differ greatly. My complications most likely would have been eliminated. However, my brother's circumstances would not have changed at all. The medical and pharmaceutical advances have made the recipient's life easier and the organ's longevity greater, but the donor who risks his or her life and makes a great sacrifice must still go through the same painful, invasive and life-changing surgery. I think if you were to survey donors today, you would find that they would do it all over again. Speaking as a two-time recipient, I stress that every donor is a hero, and I can never repay the gifts that I have been given. These everyday heroes need more credit in all forms, because if we did not have them, you would not have us.