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Committee on Public Health
Re: Senate Bill #673

January 28, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a hematologist and medical oncologist writing on behalf of the issue addressed by Senate Bill #673. This bill requests required coverage for the cost of testing for bone marrow donation. At this time, testing for bone marrow donation is covered by the volunteer. Donation to the bone marrow registry is vital for the lives of many patients who would otherwise have incurable and terminal disease. Bone marrow transplantation replaces a patient's diseased marrow with healthy blood-forming cells from a volunteer donor. Bone marrow transplantation is potentially curative in a number of diseases including leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, aplastic anemia, inherited immunodeficiency, hemoglobinopathies, and inherited metabolic disorders.

However, there is a great need in increasing numbers of donors in the National Marrow Donor Program. Each patient who requires a transplant must have a suitable match. Unfortunately, at this time, over 70% of patients do not have a match. Therefore, more donors, especially those who are American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or multiple-race, are needed.

I believe that passing Senate Bill #673 will greatly improve the number of donors in the state of Connecticut by removing an obstacle in recruiting potential volunteers. With more potential donors, there is a greater chance for a patient to have a match for a life saving procedure.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Timothy Hong, MD