

Testimony for SB00673 and SB1014 "An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Bone Marrow Testing"

My name is Todd Ellison and I would like to offer testimony in support of this bill. Although I am not a CT resident, I feel as though the implications of this bill reach much further than CT's borders. By having bone marrow testing covered by insurers (thus alleviating the burden of cost) will allow a greater number of people to be tested and added to the roles of potential bone marrow donors. Increasing the number of possible donors will ultimately result in increasing the number of "matches" for bone marrow transplantation.

Many patients waiting for a bone marrow match never find one and die as a result. I was one of the lucky ones. Ten years ago I was diagnosed with CML/chronic myelogenous leukemia and was told that I needed to have a bone marrow transplant. All of my family members were tested, but no match was found. A search in the National Marrow Donor Program's registry (which included approximately 3 million registrants at that time) also resulted in no matches. My employer at the time raised funds and with the help of our local NMDP had a bone marrow drive with the hope of locating a potential life-saving match for me. Again, no match was identified. Ultimately a search was conducted in the international registries where two perfect matches were identified. I received my new bone marrow on September 11, 1997 and because of that am able to be here today and testify on this important legislation. Finding my match and having my transplant has allowed me to go on to obtain a master's degree in social work and I now work as the Clinical Oncology Social Worker in the bone marrow transplant unit of Roger Williams Medical Center in Providence, RI.

Support for this bill really comes down to simple arithmetic. By requiring insurance companies to cover the cost of testing it makes testing more accessible to a larger segment of the community. Increased access will result in increased testing, increased testing will result in an increase of possible donors, an increase of possible donors will result in an increase in "matches", more "matches" will result in more bone marrow transplants, and that will ultimately result in more lives saved. I urge you to please do your part in helping to save more lives and pass this crucial legislation.

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