

March 14, 2007

State of Connecticut General Assembly  
Committee on Public Health  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

To the Members of the Committee on Public Health:

My name is Patricia Lang. I have been the Director of the Rhode Island Blood Center Marrow Donor Program since 1991. We are one of 70 donor centers in the National Marrow Donor Program whose mission it is to facilitate the donation of marrow/stem cells from unrelated donors to patients suffering with various diseases.

When a patient needs to find a matched donor for a transplant they only find one within their family 30% of the time. When they then search the National Marrow Donor Program they will find a donor 67% of the time. You can see that not everyone finds a match just by needing one. And differences exist by racial and ethnic heritage. For instance, while a Caucasian person will find a donor 73% of the time, an African American will have a matched and available donor only 45% of the time.

Recent advances in the science of cord blood transplantation have led to a potential solution for the problem of "no match". For many patients, especially minority patients, a cord blood transplant is the best or only hope for survival.

The mandate of the National Marrow Donor Program was expanded when the federal Stem Cell Transplant Act of 2005 was signed. The C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program, created by the Act, now includes the National Cord Blood Coordinating Center to manage the listing of cord blood units from public banks around the U.S. It follows that the National Marrow Donor Program supports state legislation such as HB 7158 "An Act Concerning the Establishment of an Umbilical Cord Blood Bank for Connecticut Residents".

It should be pointed out that other states such as New Jersey and Texas have already created and funded public cord blood banks. Other states such as New York, Virginia and Rhode Island are considering similar legislation. An additional benefit has been the availability for research use of cord bloods that are unusable for transplant.

The proposed Connecticut bill is using an innovative approach that encourages regional collaboration with existing cord blood banks which will ensure access to public cord blood banking as quickly and efficiently as possible. That is why the Rhode Island House Commission on Public Cord Blood Banking is looking at this model. To date, ten states have passed laws related to public cord blood donation and banking. According to an Associated Press article by Vinnee Tong dated 2/2/07 twelve other states are expected to consider legislation in 2007.

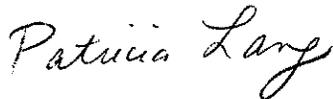
Connecticut patients are expected to benefit from a Connecticut cord blood bank. However, one might pose the question - why not let other states bank cord blood because Connecticut's patients would still reap the same benefit without the additional cost and work? My answer is that we all should contribute to a public cord blood bank that benefits the general good. It is only fair that Connecticut, and hopefully soon to follow, Rhode Island, do its fair share.

Public cord blood banking can:

- satisfy the public desire to donate
- provide cord blood for transplantation
- give minority patients more options
- provide cord blood for research.

As a representative of the National Marrow Donor Program and a citizen I encourage swift passage of this important legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Patricia E. Lang, MS, MT(ASCP)  
Director of Rhode Island Marrow Donor Program  
401-453-8566