

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee,

I want to thank all of you very much for giving me this unique opportunity to share with you my story.

My name is Matthew Criscuolo, I am 63 years old, but I am also 12 years old thanks to a kidney transplant that I received on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1996. I am a member of the National Kidney Foundation. I am also a member of the Connecticut Transplant Team and the USA Transplant Team.

In 1989 after a routine blood test performed by a friend of mine, who was a laboratory Director in New York City, he suggested that I see a nephrologist. After 6 months I was diagnosed with kidney disease. The news was devastating. My wife and my children were worried, my brothers and sisters were worried and I was worried. A simple blood test changed my life forever. Fear and confusion took over. A fear of the unknown and the confusion as to what to do next. Million thoughts came to my mind. Simple things of life that I liked, like soccer and football, were no longer interesting to me. Vacation plans were no longer important to me. I didn't care anymore going for a great dinner and a fine glass of wine, which for an Italian are sacrosanct. I started to hug my family members more frequently. It was a very difficult period of my life. But I always kept a very positive attitude and my family and friends support was very important.

As the disease progressed, symptoms started to appear, such as cramps in my legs, nausea, vomiting, fatigue and weight loss. I was restricted as to what kind of food I could eat and how much water I could drink. Before, I was a very active person and an avid sportsman but my kidney disease obviously affected my daily activities.

In 1995 I was finally placed on peritoneal dialysis. My wife and my twin brother were both tested to be possible living donors but for medical reason they were not able to give me a kidney. At the same time, I was placed on the waiting list for a kidney transplant. Although, I had some relief from dialysis, all the symptoms were still present. It was not fun to be on dialysis. I was under more medications and I was still under some food and fluids restrictions.

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1996, at 4 o'clock in the morning, a very cold and snowy morning, I received the most wonderful telephone call from Dr. David Hall, from Hartford Hospital. He instructed to go to the hospital because they had a kidney for me. Thus I received "The Gift Of Life", as we say in the transplant world. My life was saved because of the technology and because of the excellent knowledge of my doctors and surgeons. But most of all my life was saved because of the generosity, the altruism and the love for humanity of a family that in a very tragic moment had the courage to honor the wishes of my unfortunate donor who was involved in a car accident.

My donor was a beautiful young mother of two children. I am here today because of her and her family. They are my heroes. My blessing and my gratitude to them are endless and daily for their "Act of Love". I can enjoy life, my family and friends again. I became a grandfather. I can make

vacation plans now. I love soccer and football again. I can finally enjoy a good dinner and a fine glass of wine now.

However, I am the fortunate one because today and every single day many people are not as fortunate and are dying needlessly waiting for an organ. There are many generous people who would gladly offer a kidney to a family member or to a stranger. I am sure that any financial help would facilitate and increase organ donation from living donors. Therefore, I respectfully urge you to pass the Bill HB 5631. If you consider the cost of keeping a kidney patient on dialysis versus transplantation, the savings are enormous with transplantation. Also, by passing this Bill you will send a positive message to all those people who are waiting for an organ transplant that you care for their sufferings, that you want to help them and most important you will give them hope.

Thank you very much.