

Thank you very much for letting me speak here today in support of bill 290 legislation to mandate insurance companies to pay for the cost of bone marrow registration. My name is Danny Lemos and in Jan. 2005 I was diagnosed with Lymphoma.

We were all shocked because neither side of my family has a history of cancer. My Dr. at Dana Farber said the best chance for a full cure would be a bone marrow stem cell transplant from an adult donor.

He told me that they would begin testing family members but there was only a 25% chance to find a match in my family so they would also be checking the world bone marrow registry for a match. I started Chemo that night and awaited the news for a potential bone marrow match. About a week later I received the bad news that my neither my brother nor cousins were a close enough match and no one on the world registry were matches either.

I thought that I was a rare case but in fact the Dr's told me that this was very common. There were just not enough people on the bone marrows registries. World wide there are only 10 million people on the registry and less than half will go through the process. The dr's told me that they were sure there were many perfect bone marrow matches for me out there but just not enough people register. If I had found a match I had about an 80 to 90 % chance of curing my cancer. Without a match I had about an 80 to 90 % chance that this cancer would take my life within a few years. My Dr's put me in contact with the national marrow donor program out of Minnesota.

This organization helps people like me hold bone marrow drives so we can find a match that can help up cure our cancers. We started doing bone marrow drives in ct. But very few people came. It cost about \$ 55.00 to test each person and many people especially the people that you want on the registry men and women between they ages of 18 to 45 could not afford to pay for the tests.

I thought it was ridiculous that the insurance companies did not cover the cost of these tests. It was like having the Red Cross ask you to donate a pint of blood but charging \$55.00 for your trouble.

The Insurance companies would pay for millions of dollars for drugs each year to keep me alive for a few years but would not cover the \$55.00 to help find my cure? So we started to advertise that the cost for testing would be covered. Cancer is bad enough on the patient and their family.

We started funding these bone marrow drives ourselves. My out of pocket cost has been in the tens of thousands of dollars. We've gone through all our life's savings and most of our children's college funds. I had to go on disability for a year it ruined us financially.

A few months after being on 8 cycles of CHOP chemo my cancer returned. So I went on 3 cycles of ICE chemo and my only option was to do a bone marrow transplant using my own cells. Which was completed in April 2006. So far my cancer has stayed in remission but there is a likely hood that my cancer will return. There still a chance that I can find a bone marrow donor. So we continue to do drives or help with funding for other people who are having drives on their own. Passing a bill like 290 will not increase anyone's insurance premiums. Other states that have passed similar bills have not experienced any increases in premiums.

By curing people of their cancers early will save all of us money not cost us money. Insurance companies just do not want to be told what do. You will all be approached by a lot of well paid lobbyists that are paid to tell you not to pass this bill. Please see past that. Think of the legistlors in CT that had to pass mandates to force insurance companies to pay for pap-smears, breast exams, prostate exams and dozens of others that the insurance companies refused to cover. Think of how many lives they saved.

There are 5,000 new cases of blood cancers diagnosed in this country EVERY MONTH. Bone marrow transplants are being used to cure 60 different types of cancers. Passing Bill 290 will be a step in the right direction to find a cure for cancer. By getting as many people on the bone marrow donor registry you could be saving the life of your spouse or one of your kids or someone else that is close to you. We are asking you not only to vote yes on bill 290 but to see it through the floor and to pass it into law this year.

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