

February 3, 2009

290

State of Connecticut General Assembly
Committee on Insurance and Real Estate
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

To the Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee in support of S.B. 290
An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Bone Marrow Testing:

My name is Jennifer St. Peter and I am a Recruiter with the National Marrow Donor Program at Rhode Island Blood Center (NMDP). I have been involved with the NMDP since 1998 when my mother founded the Marrow Donor Program at Rutland Regional Medical Center (RRMC) in Rutland, Vermont. I worked as a volunteer recruiter for this program for ten years, during which time I also served as Chairperson of the Champlain Valley Marrow Donor Program in Burlington, Vermont, an affiliate group of the Rutland program. I began working, first as a volunteer, with the Marrow Donor Program at Rhode Island Blood Center in 2008. I continue to work with the Marrow Donor Program at RRMC as their NMPD recruiter.

The Rhode Island Blood Center is a donor center 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. The federal government contracts solely with the National Marrow Donor Program to carry out this mission according to the requirements of federal law.

The mission of the Marrow Program at Rutland Regional Medical Center is to add potential marrow donors to the National Registry at no cost to the donor. In researching the market before launching the program we found there were many people willing to be marrow donors; however, they could not afford the tissue typing to place their names on the National Registry. We felt very strongly those willing to help save another's life should not have to pay for this service. Since the program began in 1998, the cost of tissue typing for every donor who registered with the Marrow Donor Program at RRMC has been covered through fundraising efforts. This has not been easy, especially for a group that is completely made up of volunteers. Being able to devote funds raised to cover the tissue typing of just those without insurance would be a huge benefit. We would be able to increase our education and awareness programs, which would in turn bring in more life-saving donors.

405 Promenade Street
Providence, RI 02908

400 Bald Hill Road
Suite 506
Warwick, RI 02886

14 Woodruff Avenue
Suite 12
Narragansett, RI 02882

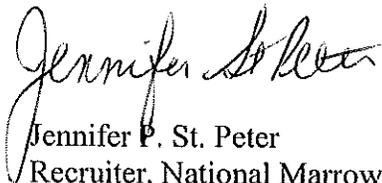
2168 Diamond Hill Road
Pavilion Plaza
Woonsocket, RI 02895

688 Aquidneck Avenue
Middletown, RI 02842

In working now with the Rhode Island Blood Center, I see how much easier it is when insurances can be billed for the tissue typing costs. We have never had to turn anyone away because due to lack of funds to cover their typing. We do not have to ask families dealing with a sick loved one to add fundraising to their stack of worries. We are able to help facility vitally important transplants in a better, more efficient manner.

The reasons I support this bill are simple. Chris Fretta. Danny Llemos. Wendy Zhawred. Terry Chase. These are just a few of the many New England patients fighting cancer and are all patients who do not currently have a match on the National Registry. With your support of this bill, these patients and so many others might find that life-saving match. The thought of the person who could save their lives not registering as a marrow donor due to lack of funds is truly tragic.

I encourage swift passage of S.B. 290 An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Bone Marrow Testing and will answer any questions you might have. Thank you.



Jennifer P. St. Peter
Recruiter, National Marrow Donor Program
Rhode Island Blood Center
401-248-5768