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Senator Toni Harp and Representative John Geragosian
Appropriation Committee Co-Chairs
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
The Connecticut Coalition for Organ and Tissue Donation, dba,
DONATE LIFE CONNECTICUT (DLC)
Presented to
THE CONNECTICUT APPROPRIATION COMMITTEE
on the
AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION

February 11, 2009

Thank you Senator Toni Harp, Representative John Geragosian and the members of the Appropriations Committee for allowing Donate Life Connecticut (DLC) to submit this written testimony for the record. DLC is an all volunteer, non profit organization that is dedicated to public education and public awareness for all Connecticut residents concerning the life saving benefits of organ, eye and tissue donation. Our statewide collaborative includes healthcare organizations and passionate individuals that recently began an initiative to decrease racial disparities pertaining to donation through grants funded by the Aetna Foundation and the New Alliance Foundation.

In an effort to improve donor registration in the African American community, DLC first reached out to the Connecticut African American Affairs Commission (AAAC). In less than a year, the AAAC has forged the way for DLC to connect with the African American community in Connecticut through various outlets. DLC has been profiled on the AAAC's thirty minute television program airing statewide on public access channels addressing African American concerns. This opportunity allowed nearly 70,000 Connecticut homes to hear personal transplantation stories of fellow African Americans. Complimenting this media event, the AAAC included DLC's mission, a donor story and a recipient story on the home page of their website! The AAAC online event calendar also includes upcoming events held by DLC. The type of exposure we receive on the AAAC website and calendar offers public awareness tools for our mission that we could receive no where else.

In addition to the public outreach offered by the AAAC, the commission has connected DLC with over 150 Hartford-based African American churches. Through this contact, DLC was able to mail each pastor a kit to help incorporate the donation message into sermons and discussions in houses of worship. Most recently, the AAAC has coordinated an opportunity for DLC to address the Hartford Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA), further encouraging them to discuss donation with their congregations.

The AAAC has provided an invaluable service to our organization's newly funded program to decrease racial disparities. Without the contacts and endorsements of the AAAC, this project would have been difficult, if not impossible to be successful. The resources and community bridges that the AAAC provides to the the African American community are necessary tools for heath care organizations to utilize to reach target audiences. DLC seeks to provide the tools for all Connecticut residents to make an educated decision to save another person's life. DLC plans to continue this new program for years into the future, ultimately decreasing racial donation disparities in Connecticut. The success of this initiative is dependent on the functioning of the African American Affairs Commission.

Donate Life Connecticut thanks you for the opportunity to testify to the importance of our forged partnership to save lives in the African American community.