



**American
Red Cross**

Connecticut Blood Services Region

Testimony of Celina Frelinghuysen 03-12-2010

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Celina Frelinghuysen and Hello, my name is Celina Frelinghuysen, and I am a seventeen-year-old student living in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Last year, around this same date, I came to testify about 16 year olds being allowed to donate blood with parental consent in the state of Connecticut. However, I was very disappointed to learn that the legislature did not even call this issue to a vote. Considering that many other states have already begun reducing their donation ages to 16 with parental consent, why can't Connecticut follow in their footsteps? This simple change will only help save more lives.

I am strongly in favor of allowing students aged sixteen and older to donate blood in Connecticut. Due to my experience, I believe that giving blood is one of the most incredible gifts a person can give to another in need.

Although I may look like a healthy teen, that was not the case a few years ago. In sixth grade I was diagnosed with Primary Immunodeficiency, a genetic disease that could have been fatal, if not treated immediately. Even though it was a big shock, the diagnosis fit; I had been sick all my life, and no over-the-counter-medicines seemed to work. However, the treatment for my illness was not one I welcomed easily. I learned that if I wanted to be healthy, I had to be infused every three weeks with donor antibodies, otherwise known as immunoglobulin; one of the many proteins found in human blood.

I can honestly say that I would not be here right now if it was not for the amazing pool of blood donors who gave of themselves to help me. Nevertheless, only 5% of those eligible donate blood. The minimum age a donor must be in Connecticut is 17, which for most teens in high school is in either their junior or senior year. From my knowledge and experience, I believe teenagers are much more passionate than ever about donating blood. I can confidently say many of my friends, who are seventeen/sixteen as well, have offered to give blood in honor of me, but many have not been able

to because of the age requirement. Recently being sixteen, I can attest to the fact that although we may seem young, we want to get involved, and help in any way we can. If sixteen year olds are capable of driving, why shouldn't they be able to give blood? Reducing the donation age by only one year will only help others, rather than hindering anyone. Please, think of those in need, and think of how many sixteen year olds could help.

Thank you for your time.