



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

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Committees on:  
Education  
Judiciary  
Municipalities & Regional Government

March 12, 2010

The Honorable Jonathan Harris, Chairman  
The Honorable Betsy Ritter, Chairwoman  
Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee  
Room 3000, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairman Harris, Chairwoman Ritter, and Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee,

Please accept this as my testimony in support of Senate Bill 428, An Act Concerning Revisions to the Public Health Related Statutes. While this bill seeks to address many important issues facing the public health sector, I would like to voice my strong support for Section 65 of this bill. Section 65 proposes a solution that will help make organ donation easier and more accessible for those interested in providing lifesaving organs or tissues.

Currently, only 28% of Connecticut adults are registered organ donors. This ranks CT in the bottom 20 states of registered organ donors. These low statistics indicate a need to raise awareness for organ donation and create more accessible means for individuals to register to become organ donors. Section 65 of this bill aims to address this serious problem by allowing an individual to register to become an organ donor on their tax return. By creating an additional avenue for individuals to sign up as organ donors, the State of Connecticut will not only raise awareness for the critical need for organ donation, but it will also ensure that fewer and fewer individuals die while waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant.

As a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives (but a native of Woodbridge CT) I filed similar legislation this past year. House Bill 2717, An Act Establishing an Organ Donation Registration Fund, has been passed by the House of Representatives and seeks to create an organ donation advisory council, establish a voluntary fund to be used on organ donation awareness and education, provide organ donation information and ability to register as a donor with state income tax forms, and study the feasibility of becoming a donor when a person registers to vote.

In 2008, there were 708 organ transplants performed in Massachusetts. Approximately 80% of those on the wait list in 2008 did NOT receive an organ. Since 1995, 2,948 patients have died while waiting for a transplant at a Massachusetts transplant center. Nearly 3,000 individuals are currently still waiting for a life saving transplant in Massachusetts. Patients often wait for many years for a life saving organ transplant. Unfortunately, time runs out for thousands of them in the United States.

In order to address this disparity between the supply of and demand for organ donors, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed my bill, and it is now before the Massachusetts Senate Committee on Ways and Means. This bill, also known as "Laura's Law," is in honor of Laura Linehan, a Melrose, Massachusetts resident who lost her lifelong battle with liver disease after waiting for a lifesaving liver transplant. If enacted, Laura's Law will provide the necessary financial, organizational, and educational means to increase the number of organ and tissue donors in Massachusetts. An increase in donors, whether in Massachusetts, Connecticut, or anywhere in the United States, will save lives and honor Laura's life in a profound way.

I request the Committee vote favorably on this legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact my office should you require any further information.

Sincerely,

*Katherine Clark*

Katherine Clark  
State Representative