

March 1, 2011

Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee:

I am a physician and the head of pediatric rheumatology at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, as well as Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. I am writing to you today in support of **House Bill 6481**. I evaluate and treat children and adolescents with systemic lupus, and have been doing so for the past 35 years. I wholeheartedly endorse the need for a Lupus Education and Awareness Plan in the state of Connecticut.

My partner and I currently evaluate 10 new lupus patients each year, and we are following approximately 50 kids with lupus currently. Here are several key points about pediatric lupus:

- There are perhaps 300 children in Connecticut with SLE at this time.
- It is more severe than the adult version of the disease. Kids get more severe kidney complications, and the survival rate is approximately 85% after 5 years.
- 40-50% of adolescents with lupus have brain disease, resulting in poor cognition
- Teens with SLE miss, on average, 20 days of school each year
- Depression and suicide can complicate pediatric lupus
- Certain medications can cause severe cosmetic disturbances

Early detection of SLE can be a life or death difference in children. We know that prompt recognition and treatment can improve survival and quality of life. I encourage the committee to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Zemel, MD
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