

Written Testimony of
Christopher Elgee

March 7, 2012

In Support of House Bill No. 5333
Public Health Committee

Testimony in support of HB 5333
An Act Concerning Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness

Representative Ritter, Senator Gerratana and members of the Public Health Committee: I appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of House Bill 5333.

In 1997 while a senior at Fairfield University, I was diagnosed with Primary Schlosring Cholognitis which is a degenerative liver disease. I was told that while medications could control the onset of symptoms, eventually I would need a liver transplant. This diagnosis floored me. One moment, I was planning for life after graduation, the next moment I'm concerned with simply living.

Over the next seven years, my condition gradually worsened and I required more frequent hospitalizations. In 2004, I was placed on the transplant list for New York State by New York University Hospital. Since my family had been ruled out as possible donors, I would have to depend on the kindness of a stranger. My quality of life and health continued to deteriorate until July of 2008 when I was rushed to the ICU at New York University Hospital. I waited almost a month in the hospital until my prayers were answered on August 6, 2008 when I had my transplant. I was given a new chance at life.

Unfortunately too many other people on the transplant list are not afforded that opportunity and die before they are able to receive a transplant. Connecticut ranks fairly low in the percentage of residents who are registered donors with 40%. There is no reason why this number cannot be much higher. If people are educated about organ and tissue donation, they are much more likely to become registered donors. Since my transplant, I have volunteered with Donate Life Connecticut to help raise awareness of organ and tissue issue. I travel to schools and clubs to tell my story, educate, and encourage people to be donors. I strongly support HB 53333 since it would undoubtedly lead to more organ and tissue donors.

In conclusion, the most important issue in my opinion is to raise awareness of organ and tissue donation and ultimately to get more people registered as donors so that less families have to suffer through the agony of having a loved one suffer or die because they were not able to get a transplant. HB 5333 accomplishes this goal. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Christopher Elgee