

**Written Testimony of  
David Yish  
Vice Chairperson Donate Life Connecticut  
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**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee including my Senator, Senator Kane, I thank you for holding this hearing and the opportunity to speak in favor of House Bill # 5333.

My name is David Yish. I am a volunteer and it is my distinct honor to serve as Vice Chairperson of Donate Life Connecticut. Donate Life Connecticut is a non-profit organization focused on increasing the donor registry and educating the public on the benefits of Organ, Eye, and Tissue donation throughout our state.

Almost 5 years ago on April 4, 2007, right here in Hartford I received the greatest gift anyone could ever give another from someone who never knew me. My life was saved when I received a heart transplant at Hartford Hospital. Before my operation, I spent years in and out of the cardiac unit, ironically looking out the hospital window at the Capitol, never knowing if I would receive a second chance at life through the unselfish gift of a transplant. Believe me when I say that you need to be in grave condition to receive a heart transplant. In fact, the skill and dedication of the doctors and nurses at Hartford Hospital resuscitated me twice before I was fortunate enough to receive my transplant.

It is an incredible gift to receive and one I cannot give thanks enough for to my donor's family. Many recipients are left with a deep urge to give back in some fashion once they receive such a gift. I have coached in town sports and I have served a term in town government in addition to my work as a volunteer on behalf of organ donation. I don't mention this to boast, only to point out that there are many unseen, real benefits to our communities as a result of organ and tissue donation that go unnoticed.

I don't know much about my donor although I deeply wish I knew more. I do know a few things though. She was a younger married person who came from the Washington DC area. I know that her decision to be an organ donor changed my life and those of my amazing wife and two incredible kids for the better forever. She may have made the decision to become a donor days, months, or even years earlier through the efforts of others dedicated to organ and tissue donation in Maryland, Virginia or DC itself. I also know she was an incredible person much like every donor or donor family member I

have been privileged to meet. I found later that Washington DC was approximately the farthest that a donor heart could come from and still be viable for me in Connecticut.

Through the efforts of Donate Life Connecticut, its member organizations, and the work of the Department of Motor Vehicles, we have been able to increase the list of registered donors to over a million residents. This figure represent approximately 40% of our adult population. It is a great milestone but still puts Connecticut a few percentage points behind the national average. I know we can do better as a state than “almost average” and it is critical on a few levels.

Despite the work and dedication of many volunteers, 19 Americans die waiting daily for a life saving transplant. That means, on the average, every few days one of those waiting that are lost is a Connecticut resident. There is no doubt that our state is blessed with two incredible transplant centers in Hartford Hospital and Yale New Haven Hospital. Both possess the skill and know-how to save many more lives if more organs were available.

As I mentioned earlier, I was fortunate that my doctor and the Organ Procurement Organization took the opportunity that they had and made the decision to travel as far as possible to find an organ to save my life. Redoubling our efforts right here in Connecticut can reduce the wait and also the distance, saving even more lives.

House Bill 5333 is not a request for a grant or monetary funding. It is legislation that puts into place a panel where the state can join in, take a more active role, and bring all of us together who work hard to improve the odds for those who wait for a donor to give them a second chance at life; much like my donor gave me.

It also provides a mechanism for the public to make a conscious choice to support Organ, Eye, and Tissue donation now through a small \$2 dollar donation on their motor vehicle registration. These initiatives may seem small in the context of all that you have to consider this legislative session but I can assure you that they will have a profound impact on the lives of those who wait, those who donate, and the loved ones they leave behind.

I thank you again for your consideration of this important piece of legislation and respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 5333.

Thank you,  
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