

TESTIMONY FOR ORGAN AND TISSUE HEARING

MARCH 7, 2012

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING

ON JANUARY 3, 2011, AT 1:30PM, THE PHONE RANG. MY HUSBAND ANSWERED AND THE VOICE ON THE OTHER END OF THE CALL ASKED FOR ME, DEBORAH PRESCOTT. I WAS NOT AT HOME; AS A MATTER OF FACT I WAS AT THE STORE WITH MY DAUGHTER. MY HUSBAND TOOK A MESSAGE WHICH WAS: WE MAY HAVE A HEART FOR DEBORAH HOW SOON CAN YOU GET TO THE HOSPITAL? MY HUSBAND REPLIED 2 & 1/2 HOURS.

IN 2005 I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH CARDIOMYOPATHY. AND FOR 2 YEARS I RECEIVED TREATMENT FOR THIS CONDITION UNTIL I EXPERIENCED HEART FAILURE. IN JANUARY 2008, I COMPLETED THE MEDICAL EVALUATION PROCESS FOR THE TRANSPLANT LIST. I WAS PLACED ON THE NATIONAL HEART TRANSPLANT LIST IN 2008 AT THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

FOR 3 YEARS WHILE WAITING FOR THAT JANUARY 3, 2011 TELEPHONE CALL, MY LIFE CONSISTED OF HOSPITALIZATIONS, A TEDIOUS REGIMEN OF MEDICATION, FAILING HEALTH, AND TRAVEL THAT WAS RESTRICTED TO A FOUR HOUR RADIUS FROM MASS GENERAL, AND GNAUGING FEAR THAT THE TRANSPLANT MIGHT NEVER HAPPEN.

PRIOR TO MY PERSONAL EXPERINCE AS A HEART FAILURE AND TRANSPLANT PATIENT, I HAD A PASSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION. WHILE I EVENTUALLY INDICATED THAT I AM AN ORGAN DONOR ON MY DRIVER'S LICENSE, THAT DECISION WAS MADE WITHIN THE LAST 5 OR 6 YEARS WHEN I WAS FOIRCED TO FACE THE REALITIES OF MY OWN PERSONAL HEART HEALTH CHALLENGES. I AM NOW SO PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS ISSUE BECAUSE IT ISN'T JUST A BOX THAT IS CHECKED ON YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE IT IS INDEED A

DECISION TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT REVOLUTIONIZING SOMEONE'S LIFE; IT IS A LIFE OR DEATH ISSUE FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.

FOR MANY YEARS, I BELIEVE I WAS THAT TYPICAL CITIZEN WHO DIDN'T THINK ABOUT ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATIONS BECAUSE IT WAS NOT A POPULAR OR REGULAR TOPIC OF CONVERSATION IN MY FAMILY AND WITHIN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY. THERE ARE MANY SUPERSTITIONS THAT SIMPLY BY TALKING ABOUT IT OR ASKING A FAMILY MEMBER TO CONSIDER BEING A DONOR MIGHT CAUSE SOMEONE TO DROP DEAD ON THE SPOT. I DON'T KNOW WHO MY DONOR WAS. I WILL BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL THAT SOMEONE WHO DIDN'T KNOW ME, THOUGHT ABOUT MY NEEDS AND THE NEEDS OF OTHERS SO THAT I COULD BE HERE TODAY, AND WITH MY HUSBAND, THREE CHILDREN AND 6 GRANDCHILDREN.

I AM SO HUMBLLED TO BE A WITNESS TO CHANGING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS IN MY RACE AND IN COMMUNITIES OF WORSHIP AND FAMILY. ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION HAS BECOME A TOPIC THAT IS NOW OPENLY DISCUSSED BECAUSE IT HAS BECOME PERSONAL; SOMEONE THEY KNOW HAS BENEFITTED FROM IT AND THEREFORE IT HAS BECOME LEGITIMATE.

FAMILY, CO-WORKERS AND FELLOW MEMBERS OF MY CHURCH AND OTHER CHURCHES WHO HEARD ABOUT MY MIRACLE ARE REJOICING AND THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION. TELLING MY STORY AND OTHERS TELLING THEIR STORIES, PARTICULARLY IN THE COMMUNITIES OF COLOR, HAS BEEN POWERFUL EDUCATION THAT IS CHANGING ATTITUDES.

I AM EXCITED THAT BILL NO. 5333 IS BEFORE THIS ASSEMBLY. AS I READ THE BILL, I ENVISIONED A VERY DIVERSE, BROAD BASED, EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN OF PERSONAL TESTIMONIES, MEDICAL/CLINICAL INFORMATION AND DONOR DRIVES. I SEE A STATE GETTING EXCITED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES OF INCREASED DONOR RATES THAT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT TRANSPLANT LISTS. MY HOPE AND PRAYER IS THAT THE RATE OF DONORS WOULD GROW AND GROW SO THAT **PEOPLE OF COLOR** WOULD NO LONGER BE ON TRANSPLANT LISTS LONGER THAN OTHERS SIMPLY BECAUSE THE ORGANS AND TISSUES THAT ARE CURRENTLY

DONATED ARE PRIMARILY FROM CAUCASIANS THEREBY LIMITING THE CHANCES OF ORGAN/TISSUE MATCHES BECAUSE OF RACE/ETHNICITY.

I AM PROUD OF THE FACT THAT CONNECTICUT UNDERSTANDS HOW SIGNIFICANT THIS ISSUE IS AND HAS DECIDED TO PROACTIVELY MAKE IT A STATEWIDE PRIORITY TO EDUCATE AND MAKE RESIDENTS AWARE OF THE NEED TO BE A DONOR. THIS TRULY IS THE ULTIMATE ACT OF CHARITY; OF SAYING I AM MY BROTHER'S AND SISTER'S KEEPER!

SUBMITTED BY:

DEBORAH PRESCOTT
8 JEROME AVE
BLOOMFIELD, CT 06002
860-286-8143

