

**Written Testimony of
Donna Sciacca**

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.

I am the Program Manager for the Connecticut Division of the American Liver Foundation, and I also serve on the Board of Directors of Donate Life Connecticut. I also worked for the National Kidney Foundation for 15 years. In the course of my tenure with these organizations, I have seen first-hand the impact of organ and tissue donation in saving lives. I have also seen first-hand the life losses for those individuals who have not received a life-saving transplant.

In addition to my professional affiliations and experiences with organ and tissue donation, this issue has touched me on a personal level. Two close friends required transplants to sustain life. Fortunately, they had a friend and family member who were compatible as donors. Had this not been the case, the outcome for both people may have been very different.

The proposed legislation opens the window not only to raise awareness about the importance of organ and tissue donation, but to increase the number of designated organ donors statewide. Nineteen Americans die every day due to the lack of available organs for transplantation. Currently, there are over 17,000 people in our nation awaiting liver transplants. More startling is that the overall transplant waiting list now exceeds 112,000 people.

Connecticut's donor designee statistic is below the national average of 42%. Our state has 40% of adults who have designated themselves as organ and tissue donors. The key to increasing the number of designated organ donors is education about this issue, allaying fears and dispelling myths associated with organ donation. We know that once people have a greater understanding about organ donation, their tendency is to say "yes" to organ donation designation.

We have a lot of work to do in order to increase organ donation designation and reduce the number of deaths that occur each year simply because not enough organs were available to save lives. We can get much more done through collaboration and teamwork, and I am confident that this legislation is a major step in addressing the critical issue at hand.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for introducing this life-saving legislation. I think I can also speak for the 1,200+ Connecticut residents on the transplant waiting list, as their lives truly depend upon our help.

Sincerely,

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