

Written Testimony of
Janis Wohlschlaeger

March 7, 2012

In Support of House Bill No.533,
Public Health Committee

Testimony in support of HB 5333,
An Act Concerning Organ and Tissue Donor

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.

My name is Janis Wohlschlaeger and I am from New Milford, Connecticut. I am a donor mom. My son Joseph was 11 years old when he passed away 6 years ago. I am writing in support of House Bill 5333. This legislation will increase opportunities to educate the residents of Connecticut of the importance of organ and tissue donation.

When Joseph was about 8 years old, I had gone to the DMV to renew my drivers license. As I checked out my picture, he wanted to see it too. As he examined it he asked, "Hey Mom, why is there a heart on your license". I explained to him that it meant that I was an organ donor. If anything bad like a car accident happened to me, I would want the doctors to use parts of my body, like my heart to save someone who was sick and who needed them. This would be OK. I would want them to do it. He looked up at me and said, "Why wouldn't someone want to do that." It's a conversation I would never forget. When Joseph was 11 he committed suicide. That conversation I had years earlier with him and his sweet sensitive nature enabled us to make the decision to donate his organs. It's a decision we believe he would have wanted. We needed to try and find something positive from such a tragedy.

I support this legislation as it creates an opportunity for Connecticut to increase the number of donors statewide. More lives are saved when more people say 'yes' to donation. Presently, Connecticut has 40% of adults committed to organ and tissue donation. This is below the national average of 42%. More education, information, exposure and outreach is needed to bring Connecticut beyond average.

Thank-you for introducing this life-saving legislation. I know it will have a positive impact on the lives of more than 1200 Connecticut residents waiting for the 'gift of life'.

Thank-you,
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