

Public Health Committee

March 7, 2012

Support for Raised Bill Number 56

An Act Concerning Pulse Oximetry Screening for Newborn Infants

Good morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and member of the Public Health committee.

My name is Len Wallace and I am here to testify in support of S.B. 56 **An Act Concerning Pulse Oximetry Screening for Newborn Infants.**

Congenital heart defects are the number one killer of infants with birth defects. Congenital heart defects are structural abnormalities of the heart that are present at birth. These defects range in severity from simple holes or murmurs to severe malformations, such as the complete absence of one or more chambers or valves. Some critical congenital heart defects can cause severe and life-threatening symptoms that require intervention within the first days of life. Pulse oximetry testing before discharge may be one important strategy that can be an effective, noninvasive, inexpensive tool to assist in diagnosing critical congenital heart disease.

I was born in 1982 with a rare congenital heart defect known as an endocardial cushion defect with a hypoplastic left ventricle. In laymen's terms, I was born with a weakened left ventricle which would take a pulmonary banding in my infancy to the time I was eight years old, when I underwent an experimental procedure known as a modified fontan. The day I was born, doctors could not regulate my temperature and they did not know how about your heart problem until the second day when they noticed a very loud heart murmur. As medical science has advanced in the last twenty-nine years, this particular condition could even be cured in utero. I've been told that I may be the oldest living survivor of my particular condition. With the introduction of pulse oximetry screenings, conditions like mine have become something that can be detected early and corrected much more easily than they were in my personal case. Now, I live a full life, unencumbered by the restraints of most people living with CHD and well past the "expiration date" that doctors had given me when I was born. My borrowed time is now old enough to drink, and I show no signs of slowing down.

This committee can help our young ones live longer and fuller lives by passing S.B. 56 to pinpoint critical or possibly life-threatening heart conditions that might otherwise be missed. This simple, non-invasive test could significantly improve the outcomes for hundreds of Connecticut's babies born with heart defects.

I encourage you to help give Connecticut's newborns a healthy start in life by assuring they are screened for congenital heart defects using pulse oximetry. So many young lives depend on it.

Thank you.