

Bonhomme, Penny

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To: PHC Testimony
Subject: Written Testimony in support of HB 5333

Written Testimony of Thomas A. Dempsey

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 very much appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of House Bill # 5333.

My name is Tom Dempsey. I am among the most fortunate residents of our great State of Connecticut. Thanks to an initiative within The Dept. of Motor Vehicle Registry in MA, I am the recipient of a healthy liver, transplanted in 1996.

I am writing in strong support of HB#5333. About 23 years ago, I became severely ill with an autoimmune liver disease. 17 years ago, quite simply, I was dying fast. On February 1, 1996, a family lost their 30 year-old son to a nervous system infection. Because they had read "the Registry's" information regarding organ and tissue donation, they met and discussed their plan to donate prior to their tragic loss. *I live today because of that decision.* That greatest of gifts saved my life hours later.

Currently, I am an advanced-care optometrist, owner of two private practices. I contribute to the health and visual well-being of thousands of CT residents. I am a runner, I ski, I play and coach softball. Most importantly, since transplant I have become husband to the woman who stuck by my side throughout all of my hospital stays and illnesses, and the *very proud* father of two bright and beautiful young girls, aged 10 and 6. I have become very close with my donor's family--they are *my* family now.

This family of mine, that travels across the country (CT, FL, MN, KY, and PA) promoting organ and tissue donation with me, would simply not exist, were it not for a family of strangers whose *state of residence* taught them about the life-saving gift of organ and tissue donation.

We want desperately for CT to educate its population and offer residents the option, the

opportunity, to help further raise awareness across our state--quite simply--the chance to save lives.

I believe that through this legislation we can and will reach and surpass the national average of 42% of adults pledging donation.

Why should CT lag behind the national average? I believe that our state wants to do more than its share to keep 19 people from dying every day in the U.S.

I believe that awareness leads to action. I believe that the outreach proposed in HB#5333 will save lives in CT and across America. Connecticut needs to become a leader in organ donation.

Knowledge is power, and awareness is action. Let's educate our population and expose them to donation...Let's equip them with that *power to act*. Let's model

our efforts after the states that lead in providing these tools to their citizens. *Let's save more lives.*

I thank you sincerely for introducing this legislation. I know it will have a hugely positive impact on the nearly *1,300 Connecticut lives that hang in the balance*, awaiting the 'Gift of Life' that I have been fortunate enough to have already received.

Thank you once again,

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