



**American
Red Cross**

Connecticut Blood Services Region

**American Red Cross
Statement to the Children Committee
State of Connecticut General Assembly– Raised Bill 6331
February 21, 2013**

***Testimony of Donna M. Morrissey, Director, Communications
American Red Cross Blood Services Northeast Division***

Chairpersons Representative Diana Urban, Senator Dante Bartolomeo and
Members of the Children Committee:

I am pleased to be here today on behalf of the American Red Cross to wholeheartedly support Raised Bill 6331. My name is Donna Morrissey and I am the Director of Communications for the American Red Cross Blood Services – Northeast Division, encompassing thirteen states, including Connecticut. I am a proud blood donor, and in the last six months two of my family members needed emergency blood transfusions to stay alive. I will forever be grateful to those blood donors who gave selflessly, that I will never meet and are heroes to me because they provided a profound gift of life during my family's time of need.

I also serve on the American Red Cross National Advanced Public Affairs Team. I have been deployed over 14 times for Disaster Relief starting with Hurricane Katrina. Recently, I was deployed to New York City in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy and I also served on Cape Cod during the historic February blizzard.

On December 14, I responded along with 170 Red Cross volunteers who answered the call for help. We stood arm in arm to assist our neighbors and first responders during this unimaginable tragedy. The Red Cross provided more than 50 units of blood, platelets and plasma to Danbury Hospital. My heart and prayers remain with the community of Newtown. I saw first hand how important it is to have a sufficient blood supply for the communities we serve.

Raised Bill 6331 would enable our young leaders of tomorrow - such as the wonderful students here today from Hartford Public High School - a chance to effectively make a difference in the lives of others. The American Red Cross strongly supports the ability of 16-year olds in Connecticut to donate blood because it will increase the number of eligible donors and enhance our ability to meet the current demand for lifesaving blood and blood products. Nationally, blood donations from young people age 16-19 accounts for 14.5% of the American Red Cross blood supply.* Allowing 16-year olds to participate in our lifesaving mission will add 50,000 potential new donors in Connecticut.

I urge you on behalf of the Children Committee and for the communities across Connecticut that we serve to vote in favor of this legislation and enable 16- year olds with parental consent to have an active role in making a difference in the lives of others. I hope you will be a conduit so that Connecticut will join all of the other twelve states in our Division and enable 16-year olds to make a profound difference in the lives of patients among us.

Our valued 17 and 18-year old high school donors already understand the crucial need to give the gift of life and demonstrate outstanding leadership by sponsoring blood drives in their high schools, representing more than 12% of blood donations in Connecticut. By allowing 16-year olds to donate, the meaningful impact of our high school donors will only increase, which is a good thing.

About 10% of the blood distributed to Connecticut hospitals annually is imported. We hope to change that and become self-sufficient. It is the blood on the shelves today that helps save lives tomorrow.

Thank you so very much for the honor to testify before you and for your consideration regarding this important legislation.

*On March 9, 2007, the Board of Governors of the American Red Cross adopted a Resolution To Approve 16-year-olds As Eligible Blood Donors. Accepting blood donations from 16-year-olds has proven to be an acceptable practice and the majority of states have now adopted lowering the minimum donation age. American Red Cross policy requires parental consent from 16-year olds in those states where they are permitted to donate blood.