

Good morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Marci White and I am here to testify in favor of proposed HB 5728 *An Act Concerning A Study Of Breast Cancer Rates In The State And Potential Causes*.

In February of 2012 I was diagnosed with stage 2(a) breast cancer. At only 30 years old with two young children I had only one option, SURVIVE!

On Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> of last year I felt a lump on my left breast as I showered. It was very noticeable, about the size of a bouncy ball. I immediately knew. After undergoing an emergency biopsy, on Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> the doctor confirmed my fears. I am considered a triple negative with an aggressive level 3 cancer, which is all bad news. Within the next two weeks I had the following tests done: MRI, mammogram, ultrasound, echo cardio gram, blood work, CT scan, bone scan, and lastly surgery to have a port placed in my chest. In conclusion of all these tests and procedures it was a relief to learn that it hadn't spread to my lymphoids or organs but it was just a matter time. Being so young with such fast spreading cancer cells I had to start chemo right away.

I had a total of 16 chemo treatments. At one point while undergoing chemo I was hospitalized due to a low blood count (a.k.a neutropenic). Imagine not being home with your kids for days. While in the hospital I was given neupogen shots. These shots are a booster which allows your bone marrow to rapidly reproduce which in return puts a lot of pressure within the bones and can cause severe bone pain. I unfortunately experienced this pain on a day when my husband brought the kids to see me. He caught me as I fell crying, crying out for help, that it hurts. My children were quickly rushed out of the room so they didn't have to watch me suffer. Did I mention my children were 4 and 6 years old? Along with neutropenia here are some other side effects I've suffered: loss of hair, dry skin, dry mouth, loss of appetite, loss of nails, bruising under all the other nails, constipation, hemorrhoids, nausea, vomiting, sleep insomnia, perimenopause (which has its own list of side effects like hot flashes) and lastly memory loss (a.k.a chemo brain) which I still suffer from and they aren't sure why. Imagine how my 60 year old mother felt watching helplessly as I went through all of this? Imagine if it were your daughter? Chemo did wonders, however, my tumor burst into many pieces making a lumpectomy a lot harder with no guarantees. From the words of my doctor for me to take into consideration Dr. Cheng said "if it took your body only 30 years to develop this breast cancer, think of what can develop in the next 30 years". Not wanting to ever go through that battle again I underwent a double mastectomy.

September 20<sup>th</sup> 2012, I had a double mastectomy. I'm happy to announce that they were successful in getting rid of all the cancer and there was no spread of it to my lymphoids. At the time of that surgery I also had expanders placed in. On Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> of 2013 I had my expanders removed and silicone implants were put in place. In May I will have my nipples & areola reconstructed. No, my nipples aren't sitting on ice somewhere. They will make me new ones from my own skin and tattoo the color on. With each of these procedures I am under anesthesia & laid up for weeks.

I along with my paternal aunt had the BRCA 1 & 2 genetic test done, which came back negative. My aunt was only 40 years old when diagnosed and is also a survivor. She grew up in Shelton and settled down in Naugatuck. I have lived in Seymour my whole life and am raising a daughter and son there. I love my town, however, was blown away when I learned that CT has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest incidents of breast cancer in the Nation with Seymour being in the top 3 slots. This just isn't acceptable. The Department of Health & Human Services will also try making it sound better by stating how CT has improved from the 16<sup>th</sup> highest death rate from breast cancer to the 34<sup>th</sup>. This is great yes but doesn't change the fact that I along with many others had to go through hell and back to survive. It also doesn't change the fact that with each diagnosis these women and men are getting younger and younger. I now fear for my daughter and that's why I am here today. I want to preserve my hometown & protect the next generation. Please help our state learn why we have such a high rate of breast cancer in order to protect others from enduring what I and my family have gone through. Thank you.

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