

**Written Testimony of  
Leslie Schlemmer**

**March 4, 2015**

**In Support of House Bill No. 6281  
Public Health Committee**

**Testimony in support of HB No. 6281,  
An Act Concerning Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness**

Representative Albis, Representative Riley and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Leslie Schlemmer. I am an organ transplant recipient. I am writing in support of House Bill Number 6281. This important legislation will increase opportunities to educate the residents of Connecticut about the importance of organ and tissue donation by creating a voluntary \$2 check off on vehicle registrations and renewals for a Donation Fund. This Donation Fund will be used for public education to increase the number of registered donors.

Thirteen years ago I received a life-saving transplant. At the age of 34 I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder that had severely cirrosed my liver. My liver, normally the size and shape of a football, was so scarred that it was like a beat up baseball. The blood that normally flow through a healthy liver could not get through my liver. This caused various symptoms of liver failure, from exhaustion to bleeding internally. I was listed for transplant after one severe internal bleed the left me close to death, hospitalized, with no hope. You see, you need a liver to live, and mine would simply never get better.

Hope arrived through the generosity of a stranger, someone who had made the choice to give the gift of life to others. I am alive today because of this amazing gift! Prior to transplant it was hard for me to get out of bed; every day was a struggle.

By the grace of God and organ donation my husband and I will joyfully celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary this year. I work full time in a position I love and take pride in actively volunteering in my community as a church Deacon, scholarship chairperson, community event planner, children's literacy advocate and musician. I also share my story as a volunteer with Donate Life Connecticut. Through sharing my story and educating the public about organ and tissue donation this organization has given me the opportunity to offer hope to others.

I endorse this legislation as it will create an opportunity for the public to aid a fund that will help pay for public education of organ and tissue donation and ultimately increase the number of donors statewide. Lives are at stake with approximately 18 Americans dying daily simply because an organ didn't come in time. Connecticut is below the national average of adults committed to organ and tissue donation. By

increasing education, information, exposure and outreach we can increase the number of registered donors in Connecticut. The ultimate goal is to save more lives because donation really does work. I am living proof! Creating a Donor Fund by giving members of the public a choice to check a box to voluntarily give \$2 to the fund when renewing or receiving a vehicle registration will accomplish this goal.

Right now, today you have the power to make a positive impact and give hope to the more than 1300 Connecticut residents waiting for this amazing "gift of life". Thank you for having the foresight to introduce this life-saving legislation.

Sincerely,

Leslie Schlemmer  
16 Whittlesey Ave  
New Milford, CT 06776  
860-354-4227  
jschlemmer7889@sbcglobal.net