

**Written Testimony of
- Kari A. Mull -**

March 4, 2015

**Testimony in support of HB 6281,
An Act Concerning Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness
Public Health Committee**

Representative Ritter, Senator Gerratana, and members of the Public Health Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony in strong support of House Bill #6281, An Act Concerning Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness.

My name is Kari Mull. I am the sister of Amanda Paro. Amanda passed away in a weather related car accident in 2003. She was three months short of graduating with her nursing degree from Colby Sawyer College. In our darkest hour of grief, my family seized the opportunity to fulfill my sister's final gift to the world, as she became a donor. She gave sight to a 68 year old grandmother and a 17 year old high school male. Twenty-three people received bone grafts from Amanda for surgeries including hip and knee replacements. One of her heart valves was transplanted into a 9 year old little girl. Countless others received her skin for grafts to heal burn and her veins for by-pass transplants. My mother, my living sister and I find great comfort knowing that Amanda's gift helped others *also* avoid losing their loved ones. Months after Amanda's passing, I began volunteering and sharing our experience as a donor family. When the opportunity presented itself, I changed career paths and began working with Donate Life Connecticut.

I feel great pride to work with an organization that honors the gifts given by people like my sister and that strives to save the lives of thousands still in need. Over 123,000 Americans presently are waiting for a life saving transplant. Generally there are two ways off the waiting list: receive an organ transplant or die waiting. It is unforgivable that every day in this country 19 Americans die waiting for their 'gift of life'.

Donate Life Connecticut's mission is to increase the number of registered organ and tissue donors in the state through outreach and education. We educate the youth of Connecticut through in-house high school programs, host an annual Donate Life art contest, and speak to college medical students. We work closely with the CT DMV to ensure every resident has the opportunity to join the Donor Registry during licensing transactions. We work with municipalities and workplaces to increase donor awareness to employees and communities.

We work collaboratively with the organ procurement organizations and transplant hospitals in the state to best utilize our resources to reach our intended audience – the entire state of Connecticut. We do this with NO employees. Donate Life Connecticut is led by our 150 active volunteers who have personal connections to donation and transplantation. We are led by a

volunteer Board of Directors and programs are led by two independent contractors. We do all of this with a budget under \$150,000.

Imagine what we could do with a stable source of revenue. Imagine the number of people we could reach and educate about organ and tissue donation. *Imagine the lives we could save.*

HB6281 creates an opportunity for the public to voluntarily contribute funds via a check off box on car registration transactions – for the Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Fund. This fund would be used to expand and implement programming that could help save the lives of the 1,471 Connecticut residents waiting for organ transplants. 29 other states have similar funds in place funded by similar DMV transaction check off boxes. Our proposed legislation includes reimbursement of actual operating costs of this fund's creation for the inaugural year. Please support this bill and save Connecticut lives.

With great respect and gratitude,

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