

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-5160

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING THE DONATION OF BLOOD BY MINORS.

**Vote Date:** 3/9/2018

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 2/28/2018

**File No.:** 15

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Public Health Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill would allow 16-year-old individuals with written consent from his or her parent or guardian to donate blood. The bill specifies that such donations must be made at a voluntary blood donation program. Currently, the law allows 17 year-olds without parental or guardian to consent to donate blood.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**Rep. Mitch Bolinsky, Connecticut General Assembly, District 106<sup>th</sup> District;** Rep. Bolinsky expressed full support for this legislation. He became closely involved with this issue when a constituent, Harrison Eppers, a Newtown High School senior, was unable to donate blood to help his mother who was being treated for a rare blood disorder. Harrison arranged a successful blood drive at his high school that could have been twice as successful if 16-year-old students, with written parental or guardian consent, could have donated blood. A similar bill, HB 6331, was raised in 2013 and passed the Children's, Public Health and Education Committees but was not acted on in the House of Representatives. Rep. Bolinsky encourages the committee to move this bill forward promoting a positive policy revision.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Harrison Eppers, Newtown:** In his testimony, Harrison shared with the committee his personal experience when he arranged a school blood drive to help his mother, Shelley Eppers, who suffers from a rare blood disorder. Through this experience, Harrison learned that Connecticut is one of only five states with a law that allows only individuals 17 years and older to donate blood.

Approximately 38% of our population is capable of donating blood but only 10% do so in a given year. There is an enormous demand for blood each day. Allowing 16 year-olds with written consent from a parent or guardian to donate blood will increase the supply and save lives. He asked the committee to imagine someone close to them in need of blood and the positive effect this legislation could deliver in saving lives in Connecticut.

**Roy Edwards, Senior, Newtown High School:** Roy shared with the committee that he assisted Harrison Eppers to organize the blood drive at Newtown High School. The response from teachers and students was overwhelming. Everything was proceeding well until the organizers realized that Connecticut law prohibits 16-year-old from donating blood. Current law significantly reduced the amount of blood that could have been collected that day from students who clearly wanted to help. Roy testified today to ask Connecticut lawmakers to pass this legislation already allowed in 42 other states in the US. The particularly stormy winter season of 2018, forced the cancellation of several blood drives in Connecticut forcing the Red Cross to issue an emergency call for new donors. Allowing 16 year-olds with permission to donate blood would help to reduce shortages and save lives.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Pam Lucashu, Durham, Connecticut:** There exist risks of an adverse event occurring for 16 and 17 year old blood donors. Among such risks are head injuries, dental injuries and lacerations. Experiencing such an event could prevent future participation in blood donor programs. Blood donations by minors without parental consent are an unnecessary invasion of parental rights.

Ms. Lucashu referred to testimony that was provided by health care workers regarding a similar bill raised in 2013. The health care workers depicted their experience with high school blood drives and their concerns that peer pressure would lead teens to withhold important health information when participating in blood drives.

Pam asked the Committee to protect the health of our youth and preserve parental rights by voting no on this bill.

**Reported by: Kathleen Panazza**

**Date: 3/29/2018**