

Rory Edwards / February 28, 2018
Testimony to Public Health Committee in Support of **HB 5160:**
AN ACT CONCERNING THE DONATION OF BLOOD BY MINORS

(Madam/Mr) chair and members of the committee, I would again like to thank you all for giving your full consideration to HB 5160, regarding the blood donation of minors, a bill that I fully support for its potential to increase the supply of life-saving blood to those who need it.

My name is Rory Edwards—I'm a senior attending Newtown High School, and in October of this past year I had the unique opportunity to work with Harry in organizing a blood drive that our teachers and fellow classmates could donate in. Although at first we were unsure as to how much support the drive would receive, we were quickly blown away by the overwhelming eagerness of those around us to give up a vital part of their body to help save the life of someone they will probably never meet. Over the weeks before the drive, it felt like every day someone was asking us, "How do I sign up?" or "What can I do to help out?" Everything was going really, really great until we realized that according to Connecticut law, our 16 year old classmates were not allowed to contribute to this drive. This discovery gutted us and our project, and although the blood drive ended up a success, but it left a somewhat bittersweet taste in my mouth, thinking of the unclaimed potential of all those willing and eager could-be donors.

It's for that reason that I stand here before you, pleading with you to allow my 16 year old classmates, and all those like them across the state to do their part in saving the lives of others. Our state hospitals desperately rely on the supply of blood from donations, and people like Harry's mother need them in order to continue their therapies. Every one of our neighbors—Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island—all allow for 16 year olds to donate, as do 42 other states across our nation. The inclement weather this winter, in combination with an exceptionally tough flu season, has forced cancellations of blood drives across the state, leaving this life-giving resource in short supply. In fact, the situation is so dire that the Red Cross has been forced to issue an emergency call for new donors.

Now, I have seen the willingness of my 16 year old classmates to selflessly donate their own blood, and in light of the current shortage, there seems no better time to allow them to contribute. A lowered blood donation age would help end this shortage, and prevent future ones. It would increase the vital supply of blood to our state hospitals, who rely on donations to care for their patients. It would help people like Harry's mom continue their therapies and recover from their illnesses. It's for those reasons that I support this bill, and I call on you to do the same. Thank you for your time.