

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

Chairpersons Steinberg, Gerratana and Somers, Ranking Member Betts and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee -- My name is Harrison Eppers of Newtown.

Thank you for raising HB 5160, an act concerning the raising of the donation age of blood by minors. I am in full support of the passage of this bill to increase the supply of blood in the state of Connecticut by amending Section 19a-285a, so that with written authorization from a parent or guardian, 16 year old minors can sacrifice a part of their body for the betterment of the lives of those that need blood to continue to live.

At any given time in the United States, 38% of our citizens are able to donate blood but less than 10% do annually. So to you I ask, why're we limiting a supply that's already short? We are one of only 5 states that still has the blood donation age at 17 years of age. Why is that? Every two seconds, someone in this country needs blood. It is a priceless lifeline for many people, some on a day to day basis. Donations are used supply people undergoing surgery, undergoing cancer treatment, recovering from blood loss in accidents, and many other situations. A situation that is deeply rooted in my life is that my mother has Multiple Myeloma, a rare blood cancer. In her treatment, she has needed countless pints of blood in transfusions and chemotherapy treatment. I've come to understand how important and empowering the act of donating blood is, but also watch her genuine instinct to hold onto life. I knew that I couldn't watch her suffer and needed to do something to improve her situation. At first, I started donating my own blood, but soon I realized that wasn't enough. Then, I hosted my own blood drive with my friend Rory Edwards to rally others to our cause. We received tremendous support from that and it was an extremely humbling experience. However, I had many underage would-be participants who were eager to make a difference. It was very hard for me to turn them down, but I vowed to them that I would try to make a change so they could. So, here I am today.

As I can imagine, I'm sure there's people in the room that have received blood donations before. And I'm sure it was a great relief when you had a successful transfusion and could live another day. But imagine for a second that the hospital didn't have enough blood to give you. In some places in this country, that is a stark reality. Blood is not always plentiful and donation centers are always pleading and incentivizing people to donate just 1 pint. The demand for blood is colossal on a daily basis. It is always wearing down the short supply we give. Opening up blood donation to 16 year olds would only further alleviate the demand for blood and save lives. Every pint of blood can save up to 3 lives. Imagine the impact we can have in this state if we incorporated this new pool of selfless youth we have today. I believe the change would be unprecedented. The time to act to save the lives of our family, friends, and fellow countrymen is NOW.

Thank you.

Harrison Eppers