

TO: Assembly Committee on Health
FROM: Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
DATE: February 3, 2016
RE: AB 752 – Bone Marrow and Organ Donor Leave

Good afternoon Chairman Sanfelippo and committee members. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share testimony today. My name is Juliet Kersten and I am a Vice President for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin serves children from every county in the state. We have inpatient hospitals in Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. We care for every part of a child's health, from critical care at one of our hospitals to routine checkups in our primary care clinics. Children's also provides specialty care, urgent care, dental care, emergency care, school health nurses, Foster care and adoption services, family resource centers, child health advocacy, health education, pediatric medical research and the statewide poison hotline.

I am speaking today on behalf of Children's in support of Assembly Bill 752, which would allow an employee to take up to six weeks of leave for the purpose of serving as a bone marrow or organ donor. I would like to recognize the authors of this bill, Senator Darling and Representative Mason, for their work on this issue. There has been a great collaboration of supporters from across the state that has allowed this important legislation to move forward. Children's was proud to host a press conference last week with partners throughout Wisconsin to show support of this bill.

Being a donor improves the lives of others through transplantation, therapy, research, and education. While there have been amazing advances in surgical transplants allowing us to save the lives of children and adults that were unimaginable a few years ago, on average, 22 people die each day awaiting a transplant. One organ donor can save the lives of up to eight people. This bill will go a long way in helping to save and enhance the lives of people awaiting a transplant.

One of our patient families joined us at the press conference to tell their story. They could not be here today but have given permission for me to share a little bit of their story. Linda Bevec and her daughter, Claire, from Kenosha are aware of the pain and difficulty that families going through organ transplant face. Claire was born with a rare kidney and liver disease, causing her organs to fail at only eight years old. Because no one in the family was a match, the Bevec's had to look for unrelated donors. Luckily, Claire found a generous family friend to donate his own kidney. Claire's kidney transplant took place at Children's Hospital in 2010. Claire is now a freshman in high school and enjoys being in school plays and musicals, horseback riding, playing the piano, singing, following her favorite Broadway stars and hanging out with her older brother Frank and younger sister Grace.

Claire's donor Jeff shared the following comment about this legislation:

"If it wasn't for my accumulated personal time off and vacation time that I used, I probably would not have been able to donate my kidney to Claire. I think this is a wonderful idea and would allow the individuals who don't have a lot of vacation or sick/personal time banked to follow through with being a donor and saving a life."

More than 123,000 people are on the waiting list for organ donation. In Wisconsin alone there are over 2,300 people awaiting transplantation. Organ transplantation has a greater rate of success when there is a living donor. Living donors are rare; it is not often someone is willing to forgo their own organs to donate to a family member or friend. Time off of work for the surgery and recovery time, plus the financial risk and jeopardizing their job security, are huge barriers for live donors.

This bill would make living donation a viable option for many more people. Removing barriers to organ donation is one of the greatest things we can do as a state for our children and adults awaiting transplantation. This legislation will save lives.

Thank you Chairman Sanfelippo and committee members for allowing me to submit testimony today in support of AB 752. If you have any questions you can contact me at JKersten@chw.org or via phone at 414-266-3016.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
CORY MASON

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY
66TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
REPRESENTING THE RACINE COMMUNITY

To: Members, Assembly Committee on Health
From: Representative Cory Mason
Date: February 3, 2016
Re: Assembly Bill 752, Relating to: leave from employment for the purpose of serving as a bone marrow or organ donor and providing a penalty

Chairman Sanfelippo and members of the Committee, thank you for holding today's hearing on Assembly Bill 752. I am pleased to coauthor this critical, bipartisan legislation with Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) and Sen. Bewley (D-Mason). Assembly Bill 752 has broad support from members of Wisconsin's medical and bone marrow and organ donor communities, as well as from families who have had their lives saved by organ donation, and will ensure Wisconsinites who wish to donate organs get the time off work necessary to make a donation. Organ donors will now be able to take six weeks of unpaid leave to recover from organ donation surgery

I was inspired to coauthor this legislation by a constituent whose life was saved by an organ donation. She urged me to look for new solutions to assist the over 2,000 Wisconsinites waiting for an organ donation. When researching this issue, I discovered many middle class Wisconsinites want to become organ donors, but are unable to get the leave from work necessary to donate and recover. Assembly Bill 752 ensures that a broad range of individuals looking to donate organs or bone marrow are able to give the gift of life to individuals who may not be directly related to them.

Assembly Bill 752 will also assure potential bone marrow and organ donors that they will have the time to recover from an operation and return to work, without worrying about losing their job security. This should increase the number of bone marrow and organ donors in our state, and reduce wait times for Wisconsinites who urgently need a donation from a living organ donor.

I am pleased that a broad, bipartisan group of legislators is cosponsoring Assembly Bill 752. It is my hope that this legislation will move through the Legislature quickly and be adopted soon.

