

## Written Testimony

In Support of SB796 – Relating to benefit protection for living organ donors.

Good afternoon Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of Donate Life North West in support of SB796. My name is Patricia Iorg. I live Portland

On April 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, I walked in to OHSU at 5:45am, a very healthy individual. I had never been hospitalized, I had never had surgery, I had never experience a major illness short, or long term. I woke up approximately 12 hours later, slightly groggy and with a pre-existing condition. I had donated a kidney.

It all started one day, in the summer of 2016. My boss let me know that, due to a rare genetic disease his kidneys were failing. At the time his kidneys were functioning at 25% of normal. His doctors expected he had maybe a year before he either had to go on dialysis or receive a kidney donation. Also due to his under lying illness, dialysis would be harder on him than on most. His best option was kidney donation. After 5 years, the survival rate for recipients receiving a living donor kidney is 90% versus 75% for those who received a kidney from a deceased donor . I told him to put me on his list for testing and then to let me know what I could do to accommodate him at work. After many test we found out I was a match. Our match was so good that they doctors said the only way we could be better was to have been identical twins.

Over the last two years, the top questions people ask me about donating are:  
Why and what was the hardest part?

Why? I have two answers

First: I was raised you help your fellow person. If you have and they need, then you give. Many people have a hard time accepting that as a reason to donate a kidney. They seem to be able to accept my second answer.

My second answer: As some who didn't have children it is my way of giving life.

The second most popular questions: What was the hardest part? Here I have two answers as well. First; it was and is hard to accept the enthusiastic kudos or praise for donating. Second, I was taking a huge risk, knowing that if I ever lost my health insurance or if the Affordable Care Act were overturned I could be turned down for health insurance. And, while I am healthy now, there is no guarantee of future health. Even with health insurance one major or even minor illness could be a huge financial burden.

I was lucky that I did not have to think about the other big hindrance to donating; being able to take the time off from work for the surgery and the potential for up to

8 weeks of recovery time. My luck was by way of my company having unlimited Paid Time off and, I was pretty sure my boss would be okay with me taking the time off to recover.

Since donating, I ignore my discomfort with the praise I get talking about my donation and I use my experience and knowledge to volunteer with Donate Life Northwest in their Erase the Wait program. Erase the Wait is a program that matches kidney donors and recipient mentors with those who need a kidney transplant and who are considering living donation.

I am also the co-chair of the Pacific Northwest Chapter of WELD, which is Women Encouraging Living Donation. We are a group of living organ donors and medical professionals who work to try to get the word out about living donation in the public.

I thank you for allowing me to tell my story and I encourage you to pass SB796. SB796 would help recipients looking for a living organ donor by removing two very large barriers for potential donors.

Sincerely,

PJ Iorg  
Living Donor