

## Written Testimony

My name is Nicole Andergard and I am a native Oregonian – raised on the Oregon Coast, educated at the University of Oregon and currently residing in Portland. Thank you all for allowing me time to testify on behalf of Donate Life NW in support of SB796.

People don't regularly talk about organ donation the way they might discuss the Portland Trailblazer's record or their favorite boutique coffee shop. However, once it becomes personal – organ donation becomes an urgent conversation – a conversation of literal life and death.

In early 2007 I didn't give much thought to organ donation, but I did have concern for my lifelong best friend. My best friend Anna and I met when we were just five years old. Fast forward through graduations, marriages and babies, Anna and I were still as close as ever, but both of our lives were about to change forever. Anna was suffering medical complications from an autoimmune disease called Lupus, and one cold night in February her kidneys shut down. For her, this event kicked off nearly a year of dialysis and challenging medical treatments, and for me, it kicked off nine months of being tested to become her living kidney donor.

I didn't know much of anything about living donation. All I knew was that my friend was suffering and becoming weaker and weaker with every dialysis treatment she completed. I didn't know what could qualify me to become her living kidney donor. I didn't know what could disqualify me either.

I began seeking information, desperate to help Anna in any way that I could. After a crash course in organ donation with the help of a donor advocate, and nine months of waiting and testing and waiting and testing, we were finally given approval and a November transplant date.

Our transplant was a success and 11 years later, my best friend's new kidney continues to serve her well. We no longer need to pretend we are sisters, because now we share something even more special, we share the gift of life.

It is imperative to note, without a directed living kidney donor, my best friend would have waited years for a kidney. Today, I am a volunteer with Donate Life NW doing my best to educate others on organ donation – especially living donation. There are currently over 850 people on the transplant waiting list in the state of Oregon, most will wait at least three to five years before they can stop dialysis treatment and get on living their lives.

I encourage you to vote to pass SB 796. Three states have already passed similar measures to protect living donors. It's time that we join these states! Thank you once again for your time, and I urge you to pass SB 796

Nicole Andergard

Living Kidney Donor and Donate Life NW Volunteer