

January 12, 2011

Senator Jim Shockley, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee

Honorable Senators,

Most of us experience some great days: graduation, marriage, the birth of a child. Last summer I was able to add to that list - I became an organ donor.

On May 26, 2010, I arrived at The Children's Hospital in Denver at 5 a.m. I reported to surgery and was given the dreaded hospital gown and (thankfully!) a pair of disposable pants. The anesthesiologist informed me this would be a painful procedure and wanted to do a spinal block. I readily agreed. My next memory was waking up in the recovery room.

I later learned the procedure had taken 3 hours. Over 1500 ml of bone marrow was removed from my hips, 10 ml at a time. My part was done. My stem cells were then processed for several hours in preparation for transplant.

The transplant happened the same day, beginning at 7:15 p.m. I got permission to leave my recovery room and visit the patient being transfused. It is very unusual for an adult donor to visit the child recipient, but this was a special case. The patient was my 13-year-old son, Morgan, who was battling leukemia.

Morgan has one brother. Siblings have a 25% chance of being a match. Big brother Seth struck out. Parents are also tested, but the percentage drops to 5%. Mom was eliminated, but I was a match!

This day almost didn't happen. Our insurance policy limits organ transplant to \$500,000. The hospital told us it might not be enough. Between Morgan's relapse in March 2010, and the transplant in May, I spent hours copying documents, applying for aid and worrying about whether we would have to sell our home to pay for our son's medical care. Finally I secured a Medicaid card, and we were accepted into the BMT program. Today, my son is home, and continues to recover.

As I typed these remarks, Morgan asked me what I was doing. His political views are still evolving, but if you questioned him, the Libertarian party would come to mind. As I tried to explain he asked me, "Why do they want to exclude pre-existing conditions? How is that helpful?" What would you have me tell my son?

Sincerely,



Ray C. Johnson