

May 13, 2014

To The Members of the PA House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 30 regarding organ and tissue donation in Pennsylvania. I am the mother of a son whose organs were donated after he was murdered.

On January 14th, 2012, my 23-year-old son Kevin was assaulted by three young men while walking down Chestnut Street in Philadelphia after a night out with friends. His girlfriend and her friend watched in helpless horror as the men struck Kevin repeatedly until he collapsed on the sidewalk. The three men took off in the car they had jumped out of to beat Kevin. Kevin never regained consciousness and was pronounced brain dead at Jefferson Hospital. Because there were conflicting descriptions of the car and the attackers, the police had a difficult time locating the suspects. They were not apprehended until a week later, when a tipster stepped forward to collect the reward that had been offered for information leading to the arrest(s).

Kevin was a 2010 Temple University graduate, who only five weeks prior to his death had moved back to Philly for a prestigious position with Marsh USA. Kevin was smart, funny, athletic, handsome and exceptionally popular- he had everything going for him and he was excited to return to Philly to be with his friends. For him to lose his life so early was profoundly painful and brought indescribable grief to his family and friends. He didn't deserve to have his life end that way. He was too full of life to be gone so young, and for him to be taken from us violently compounded our sorrow.

On that night, when our Gift of Life coordinator asked our family if we would consider organ donation, there was not a moment's hesitation: **Absolutely**. We knew that Kevin would want us to help others. We knew that in donating his organs, we were giving life back to those who were in desperate need- *how* could we, *why* would we say no? Saving other people's lives was the one thing we could do to help make our profound loss just a little less painful.

We were able to donate three organs: Kev's liver and both kidneys. The other organs were not viable due to the beating, and the procedures undergone while in Intensive Care. It was carefully explained to us that some of the organs would be needed potentially for a criminal trial. We understood the importance of "evidence" and although sorry that we were not able to help more people, we recognized the huge impact the donations would have on those three lives.

Prosecution of the criminal case was not in any way adversely affected by organ donation. The three men who took my son's life are currently serving time in prison. The man who received Kevin's liver had several additional months of life before passing, sadly; however, two others are thriving with Kevin's kidneys. I encourage you, the members of the House Judiciary Committee, to recognize that organ donation is as valuable to the donors as it is to the recipients; my son lives on through his donation! Especially for donors like us, who have lost loved ones in tragic and unexpected ways, organ donation is a way of healing an emotional wound. I encourage you to support laws like House Bill 30 that allow donation and prosecution to coexist; it is my personal experience that this is indeed possible.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, I am at your disposal.

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