

Lisa Hayes - House Bill 476 Proponent Testimony

Chairman Green, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of House Bill 476. I'm Lisa Hayes. I am the Director of Acute Care at Licking Memorial Hospital but today I am happy to have the opportunity to tell you about the most generous man I've ever known, my husband, Jerry.

Jerry never knew a stranger. We couldn't go anywhere without him speaking to someone he knew. He met a lot of people through his power washing business, Superior Suds. He was the hardest worker, and even said that he would rather work, than go on vacation – that's just the kind of person he was!

Jerry was the most selfless person I'll ever know. At Christmas every year, he would go to stores and pay for other people's gifts. It wasn't unusual for him to buy and deliver flowers to people, especially on Valentine's Day, or maybe for no reason at all! He loved dogs, volunteering at the local humane society, and had been known to pay the adoption fees for individuals adopting a dog. This is a tribute that we continue in his honor even to this day.

Jerry had always been active and in good health. So, when he randomly stated one morning in January 2015 that he had numbness in his right arm and loss of vision in his right eye, I knew we needed to get to the hospital immediately. The real shock was learning Jerry had a 7-centimeter aortic tear.

Following the diagnosis, he was quickly flown via helicopter to Riverside Methodist Hospital in Columbus where he underwent an 8-hour surgery to try to repair his heart and regain blood flow to his brain. Tragically, Jerry never woke up from this surgery and on January 14, we said goodbye.

Jerry and I had discussed organ, eye and tissue donation prior to his death. Several months before he came home from the BMV and simply said "why wouldn't someone want to be a donor? It just makes sense." It was comforting to know that he had already made the decision to donate, and he was proud of that decision.

Jerry was able to save three lives through organ donation that day. He was able to donate both his kidneys and his liver. Upon receiving a letter from the liver recipient, I learned this recipient had 14-year-old triplets -- and because of Jerry, they will get to grow up with their father. I have no doubt that these three children will also make the same decision to be an organ donor.

Jerry was also able to give sight to two individuals and heal countless others through the gift of tissue. As I told you before, Jerry was so generous in life -- it was only fitting for him to give to others in death.

While I miss him every day; our family is proud of the heroic decision that Jerry made to become an organ, eye and tissue donor. Because of my work in the hospital, I know how important it is for people to make and document their donation decisions.

If an individual dies and had not registered as a donor or ever talked about it with their family, it can often be difficult for the next of kin to know what to do. Yet is so critical – because the opportunity for donation is so rare. Less than one percent of all deaths can result in organ donation. So, when that rare opportunity occurs, it is vital that people are able to make an informed donation decision. Because not only will the patient die, but potentially the people he or she could have helped on the waiting list will die as well. What a tragedy it would have been if Jerry was not able to save and heal all those lives in his death.

Thank you for the opportunity to tell you about my Jerry and his legacy of life. And I ask your support of House Bill 476. With more dollars to educate Ohioans about the power they have to save and heal lives through donation, the better prepared people will be to make an informed donation decision and the more lives we will be able to save and heal.