



Monday, April 22, 2024

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Health Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on behalf of Abbi's Echo and as a Donor recipient myself and the parent of a child who was an organ donor at fifteen years old.

My name is Matthew Carey. I am a retired Fire chief and current pensioner of the Ohio Police and Fire pension system. I come from a family of firefighters. My dad was one, and my brothers are active full-time firefighters in Ohio. On February 7th, 2021, I received a heart transplant due to my service since 2001 as a Firefighter/Paramedic in Ohio. It was determined to be due to prolonged exposure to smoke, heat, and other chemicals during my career. I retired on January 10th, 2023. We lost our daughter Abigail Marie Carey on February 25th, 2023, due to injuries sustained in an Automobile accident on February 18th in Springfield Township, Richland County. Abigail had just recently turned 15 years old. Abigail wanted to and was able to be an organ donor. She was able to save the lives of four people along with providing the gift of sight for two and donate other organs for research including child safety restraints.

Abbi's Connection to Proposed H.B. 256

Our family has always been avid outdoor and hunting enthusiasts. We enjoy Ohio's outdoors, whether outside hunting or shooting sports such as trapshooting and archery. Abigail had been working hard to learn how to shoot a crossbow with her brother, Ryan. She wanted to take her hunter safety course to hunt deer in December 2022. We signed her up, and she completed the online hunter education course in just a few days—something I figured would take her weeks. On December 20th, 2022, she harvested her first deer and did it with a crossbow.

Abigail wanted to be an Organ donor.

Since I had previously been a Heart transplant recipient, Abbi understood what it was all about at an early age. My diagnosis and transplant happened in a short amount of time. I was diagnosed in December of 2020, and my transplant happened at Cleveland Clinic in February of 2021. The entire time, due to Covid, I was separated from my family at home while I was at the Hospital. Abigail lived through the experience, realizing the importance of being a donor. Abigail, being so young, did not yet have a driver's license. So, she did not have a state form or way to show those wishes. Her siblings, cousins, and family had already had the chance to make that decision. Abbi's older sister, Katelynn, had just recently gotten her license, and Abigail wanted something to show that, too.

Mission

To remember Abigail, support her dreams, interests, and memory.
We will strive to educate on organ donation and seatbelt safety.



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Abigail and the accident

We had been talking about getting Abigail a state-issued ID so she had something showing what she so dearly wanted: that she was an organ donor. We never got the chance. On February 18th, 2023, Abbi and Ryan were coming home from fishing. A mechanical issue caused the jeep they were driving to unsuccessfully negotiate a turn on Lexington Ontario Road in Richland County, Ohio. They struck a culvert, and Abbi was ejected from the vehicle. She became pinned under the vehicle. The very fire department I had just retired from responded and found Abigail in Cardiac arrest. They removed her from under the Jeep and transported her to the local Trauma hospital in Mansfield, Ohio. It was determined that she had internal bleeding and other severe injuries and needed to be flown to Children's Hospital in Columbus. The doctor at Mansfield did emergency surgery to stop the bleeding from her spleen, and she was flown to Columbus. My daughter fought hard, but it was determined on February 25th that she was brain dead. On February 26th she received an honor walk as she was taken to surgery for the organ donation process. In some ways, we were lucky. Abigail had already been exposed to the entire donation situation. We knew her wishes, and we knew what she wanted.

Understanding and conclusion

If proposed House Bill 256 had been enacted, Abigail would have gotten the chance to use the hyperlink then to be placed on the registry. The subject of organ donation must be discussed and talked about with everyone, young and old. Including this in all those who register for a hunting license is another avenue to get that thought and discussion done. Organ donation is a considerable decision. It is also one that many don't want to think about. That is why it is essential to ensure we provide the opportunity for Ohioans to have this subject at the forefront when they are getting a driver's license and a hunting license. It could save a life like it did in my case or save four other lives like it did in my daughter's case. You in this room may not realize it today, but you have a tremendous opportunity to save others. This simple bill will help to do just that. Save the lives of fellow Ohioans and many others across our country. Abigail's gifts ended up as far as California.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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One generous act
creates a ripple that
touches many lives.

April 20, 2023

Matthew Carey
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Mansfield, OH 44903

RE: Donation Recovery Letter

Dear Mr. Carey,

On behalf of Lifeline of Ohio, we want to express our deepest sympathies for the loss of your daughter. Our thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time.

Despite your own loss, you made the decision to donate to help others in need. We are forever grateful for your support of donation. Thanks to the generosity of heroes like Abigail, many people who are awaiting a transplant have hope for a second chance at life. We would like to share some information about your daughter's donation.

With this selfless choice, Abigail generously saved the lives of four people through the gift of organ donation. I'm happy to share that she saved the life of a woman in her forties in Indiana with her right kidney. This recipient has two children and enjoys spending time with them and her dog. She used to work at a help call-line for over 14 years. She had been on the waitlist for almost a year before received her life-saving gift. Abigail saved the life of a woman in her forties in Indiana with her left kidney. She has been married for eight years and works as an independent contractor. She had been on the waitlist for over a year. There aren't enough words to describe the debt of gratitude both of these recipients feel for your family and the amazing gift that changed their lives.

Unfortunately, I have limited information on the other two recipients of Abigail's donation, as we've yet to receive that back from the transplant centers. However, I can share that she saved the life of a woman in her forties in Michigan with her liver and she saved the life of a woman in her thirties in Michigan with her lungs. Although I don't have additional information to share on these recipients, I'm confident they are both very grateful for their second chances at life.

If you would like to connect with the recipients of your daughter's gifts, we encourage you to write to them. Included you'll find a brochure that will assist you with the letter writing process. Our Bereavement team at Lifeline of Ohio facilitates this process and can help you with any questions or concerns you may have. This is a very personal choice and is one that only you can make.

Abigail's pancreas was recovered and sent to the Nationwide Children's Hospital for research. With research and education consent, we honored her gifts through donation for research purposes to save and heal future lives through the advancement of medical research and training.

Abigail may enhance the lives of people who have suffered from a traumatic injury or degenerative disease through her donation of bone and soft tissue. Bone and soft tissue are used in treating spinal fusions, hip replacements, and joint repairs.

Generally, tissue is released for transplantation after a nine to twelve month screening process, so we cannot offer outcome information at this time. We can tell you that numerous people benefit from a single tissue donation and will experience a dramatic improvement in their quality of life. Please contact us in the future if you would like more information on how many people your daughter was able to help through tissue donation.

Lifeline of Ohio recovered your daughter's ribs for a special research project through The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center to help develop safer vehicle restraints and child restraint systems. Through this research, Abigail's gift will help prevent injuries and save the lives of countless children in the future.

Abigail successfully donated her corneas to two people in California. Both recipients are in their twenties. I don't have any further information on these recipients; however, I'm confident they are both very grateful for their gift.

Recovered corneas are considered for transplant locally first, then nationally. Corneal transplants can restore sight to adults and children ranging in age from 9 days old to 103 years old.

Thanks to your family's generous decision, we are very proud to call Abigail a hero of donation. Her final generous gift to others will never be forgotten.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve; your life has been changed forever. In these early days of mourning, you may feel an array of emotions at any given time. Please know that this is okay and completely normal. We have enclosed grief material that may help you during this difficult time.

Lifeline of Ohio would like to continue supporting your family through our bereavement program. We are here to offer support to you during this time and will be sending you grief literature for the next few months as well as invitations to various donor family events throughout the year. We are also available to you for questions regarding your daughter's donation and can connect you and your family with grief resources and other support in your community.

Wishing you peace and healing,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alex Frederick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alexandria Frederick, LSW
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