



February 23, 2022

Dear Chairwoman Byron and distinguished members of the House Commerce and Energy Committee:

Our organization writes in support of VA SB 271, which includes provisions expanding protection for organ and bone marrow living donors. We support the provision which requires an employer provide an eligible employee up to 30 business days of unpaid organ donation leave in any 12-month period to serve as a bone marrow donor.

Be The Match®, operated by the National Marrow Donor Program® (NMDP), allows patients to have access to more than 39 million potential donors worldwide, with 9 million potential donors in the United States. Be The Match Registry® members are asked to donate when a patient's doctor has identified the registry member as the best possible match for that patient. As such, that patient may lose their best or only chance of survival if the matching registry member is unable to donate for fear of losing their job or missing pay. Approximately half of the members on the Be The Match Registry® do not donate when called. These registry members do not move on to donate for a variety of reasons, including barriers related to their employment. This bill will remove one of the barriers to donation that our registry members face.

Financial hardship resulting from lost wages during the donation process is a significant barrier for potential donors. Time off to donate can especially impact potential donors who are working hourly, non-salaried, or low-wage jobs. Donating bone marrow or blood stem cells presents an opportunity to help save a life, but it also requires, on average, 40 nonconsecutive hours of a donor's time spread out over a four-to-six-week period.

From 2016-2020, 596 Virginians received a bone marrow transplant, yet 1,160 residents were in need of this life saving treatment during this same time frame. By providing employees time off outside of their earned PTO, more patients with blood cancers like leukemia and lymphoma—and diseases like sickle cell—can get the lifesaving transplants they need.

Proposed living donor protection legislation, such as SB 271, will save more lives by improving donor availability, reduce time to transplant, and provide an administratively simple solution for employers. Please support SB 271 and vote to pass it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jocelyn Thompson".

Jocelyn Thompson
Grassroots Campaign Manager
National Marrow Donor Program/Be The Match