

Bone Marrow Transplant Recipient Macy Howarth Testifies on the Need for Increased Funding for the National Marrow Donor Program/ Be The Match Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS

Howarth testified to the fact that patients from underserved populations face hurdles in accessing bone marrow transplant; how additional funding in 2022 will be used to grow the donor registry and remove barriers to access.

MINNEAPOLIS - Wednesday, May 19, 2021 -- Massachusetts resident and bone marrow transplant recipient Macy Howarth submitted written testimony today on behalf of the National Marrow Donor Program/Be The Match (NMPD or the Program) at a hearing before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies.

The committee hearing and Macy’s testimony focused on appropriations for fiscal year 2022, for which NMDP is requesting that the subcommittee increase funding for the Program to \$56,000,000 to immediately provide access to live saving cellular therapy at the point of diagnosis for all patients.

“By establishing a national bone marrow donor registry in the mid-1980s, Congress promised patients with blood cancers, like leukemia and lymphoma and over 70 other life-threatening diseases, that they would have a way to find a life-saving donor match,” said Howarth. “The Program has facilitated over 108,000 transplants between a matched, unrelated donor and a patient with a blood cancer. I am alive and able to submit this testimony today because I am one of those 108,000 patients who received the living gift of life through this national registry.”

Macy was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma when she was 18-years-old. When she beat the disease, Macy could not imagine getting cancer a second time. Over twenty years later, she did. In May 2014, Macy was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML), likely a result of her treatment to cure her Hodgkin’s Lymphoma over two decades earlier. When doctors told Macy she would need a bone marrow transplant to survive, she turned to the Be The Match Registry. Fortunately, her life-saving donor was found and Macy had her transplant three months later.

“My survival and return to normalcy as a mother and wife was only possible because of the C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program. This Program, which is authorized by Congress and has been funded by the Committee, runs the Nation’s registry, which can access more than 39 million selfless volunteers like my donor Chrissy who stand ready to be a life-saving bone marrow donor,” continued Howarth. “I was lucky that the Program quickly identified my matched donor. However, not every patient is as lucky, particularly patients from underserved populations who have numerous barriers to accessing a bone marrow transplant. The increased funding aims to immediately address unequal access to transplant.”

In addition to matching searching patients with life—saving donors, NMDP is also working to accelerate the path to transplant by partnering with physicians to provide free patient testing to determine if a patient’s cells match a donor’s cells, which has the potential to provide lifesaving transplant therapy to an additional 3,000 patients a year . Patients can face many barriers including coverage for testing fees, transportation, lodging, medication co-pays.

Howarth thanked the committee's Chairwoman, U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Ranking Member, U.S. Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK) and other her Representative, Kathrine Clark Committee Members for fully funding the C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program (Program) within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

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About Be The Match®

For people with life-threatening blood cancers—like leukemia and lymphoma—or other diseases, a cure exists. Be The Match connects patients with their donor match for a life-saving marrow or umbilical cord blood transplant. People can contribute to the cure as a member of the Be The Match Registry®, financial contributor or volunteer. Be The Match provides patients and their families one-on-one support, education, and guidance before, during and after transplant.

Be The Match is operated by the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP), a nonprofit organization that matches patients with donors, educates health care professionals and conducts research through its research program, CIBMTR® (Center for International Blood and Marrow Transplant Research®), so more lives can be saved. To learn more about the cure, visit BeTheMatch.org or call 1 (800) MARROW-2.