

*The following testimony in support of a bill to further restrict sun tanning salons in Massachusetts was given on June 12, 2007 before the Joint Committee on Public Health by Glenna Kohl. The bill never made it out of committee. In November, 2008 Glenna passed away.*

Hi. My name is Glenna Kohl. I'm 24 years old and have Stage IV Melanoma. I was first diagnosed in August of 2005 with Stage III and it has since spread throughout several areas of my body — including my brain. There is no cure for this disease, although I have undergone several different treatments and trials the past couple of years, in hopes of one of them helping me. So far nothing has worked. Before being diagnosed, I was your typical young girl. I graduated from Salve Regina University with a Bachelor's degree in Business, focusing on Financial Management. I was involved in the community and always played sports. I hope to go back to graduate school some day to pursue my passion in working with kids. My goal is to teach kids Health and Nutrition, seeing as it is such an important part of life in the world that we live in today.

I'm sharing all of this with you today, because prior to being diagnosed, I was a regular tanning bed user — since the age of 15. I started off going before school dances; throughout high school I would go throughout the winter seasons just so I wouldn't ever be pale; I continued to go throughout my college years as well — usually with a friend so that I wouldn't feel guilty, because by then I was well aware of how bad it was for me. Unfortunately, I cannot prove that my melanoma came directly from me using tanning beds, but knowing what I know now looking back, if there is one thing in my life that I could take back, it would be going to that first tanning salon when I was 15 years old.

I know that the majority of people that use tanning beds will probably never have to hear the words "it's melanoma", but I also know that the number of people who DO have to hear those words is growing rapidly. As I mentioned before, there is no cure for this disease, and gambling for your life by voluntarily stepping into those beds shouldn't be something that a 15 year old boy or girl should be allowed to decide. I wish every day that at some point when I was younger I would've heard a story similar to mine and maybe I wouldn't be in the position I'm in today. But I am. And if by me sharing my story with others can prevent even just one person from having to face this scary disease, then I will continue to share it as long as I'm able to.