

Good Morning and Thank you for hearing this bill,

My name is Deb Girard. I am the Executive Director of the Melanoma Foundation of New England . I support senate bill 903. The mission of our organization is to create awareness about the need for protection from ultraviolet radiation to stop the escalating rate of diagnosed skin cancer and melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, for children and adults across New England. You will hear many statistics today but perhaps the most important is that people who use tanning beds once a month before the age of 35 increase their melanoma risk by 75% and that nearly 70% of tanning beds patrons are girls and women, primarily aged 16 to 29. I'd like to introduce you to a few of these women.

First I'd like to introduce you to Sarah Aasheim, Sarah was first diagnosed with melanoma at age 28, she was treated and thought to be cured. In August of 2002 at age 32 and 19 weeks pregnant, Sarah found a swollen lymph node which was subsequently diagnosed as recurrent melanoma. Surgery immediately followed to remove lymph nodes in her groin. Her baby was delivered early so that she could start year-long chemotherapy. Sarah was told that she has a 50% chance of seeing her daughter enter kindergarten. Sarah loved the sun, she is blonde and fair skinned, and when she wasn't on the beach she was using tanning beds to keep that "healthy tan".

Kelli Pedroia started using tanning beds with her sister when she was 14, at age 18 she found a lesion on her thigh and was devastated to find out that it was a stage 2 melanoma. After scarring surgery Kelli continued to be drawn to tanning beds. After a second diagnosis of melanoma, she has stopped tanning and shares the story of her addiction to tanning with teens through her work with the Melanoma Foundation New England.

Meghan Rothschild was only 20 when she was diagnosed with melanoma. For 3 years she had tanned in a tanning bed at least once a week to maintain her bronze complexion. Meghan struggles with the knowledge that while she is cancer-free today at age 25, that her life style choice has so tragically impacted her life

Sarah, Kelli and Meghan present a picture of a growing number of young families who lives are forever changed by their exposure to ultraviolet radiation. We have seen little in the way of therapeutic breakthroughs in the last 20 years. Our greatest impact on reducing the threat of skin cancer and melanoma is raising awareness about the risks of UV radiation that means both outdoor tanning and indoor tanning.

When passed we seek to name this bill in memory of a young courageous woman, Glenna Kohl who lost her battle with melanoma at the age of 26 in November 2008. Glenna was addicted to tanning both in the sun and in tanning beds. When she graduated from college ready to take on the world, she was diagnosed with late stage melanoma. Glenna took on her battle with hope and shared story about the dangers of tanning with anyone who would listen. She shared her story in these halls on tow occasions as she fought for passage of this bill to help keep teens out of tanning beds.

We have an opportunity with this legislation to provide protection for our most vulnerable assets, our children as we continue to educate the public about the risk of seeking the glow from a "healthy tan". I urge you to pass bill S1329.

Respectfully submitted,
Deb Girard
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