



UPSTATE NEW YORK  
TRANSPLANT SERVICES

**Written Testimony – Buffalo Division of Budget Town Hall Meeting**

27 November 2007

Dear Budget Directors,

Thank you for taking the time to visit Buffalo in your sequence of statewide Budget Town Hall Meetings. I believe we all appreciate the increased attention our region is receiving and the additional sunlight to the budget process in general.

I would like to take the time today to make you aware of Upstate New York Transplant Services, our initiatives and an expansion we are currently undergoing. For the past twenty-five years, Upstate New York Transplant Services has been the federal and state authorized organ, eye and tissue procurement organization in the eight counties of Western New York (Alleghany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans and Wyoming). In carrying out this responsibility, Upstate New York Transplant Services is one of only eight organizations nationwide to offer opportunities for organ, eye and tissue donation and transplant.

Western New York families have shown increased generosity with regard to donation. As recently as 1997, Upstate New York Transplant Services had just 200 organ, eye and tissue donors. This past year, Upstate New York Transplant Services nearly surpassed 1,000 total donors with increases of 112 tissue and 93 eye donors respectively from 2005. In addition, for the past eighteen months, Upstate New York Transplant Services has maintained the highest organ donor conversion rate in the country out of 58 federally authorized organ procurement organizations. Organ conversion rate is the percent of eligible organ donors whose family or next-of-kin consents to donation with the consent resulting in successful transplant. Upstate New York Transplant Services' rate of 91.1% is first nationwide and nearly 30% higher than the national average.

It is with this foundation of success that Upstate New York Transplant Services continues to expand. Two years ago, Upstate New York Transplant Services was approached by representatives of area hospitals under the premise of bettering, in both practice and price, the regional blood program. Outside of personnel, blood is among the highest recurring costs hospitals in Western New York face, and the practice of the American Red Cross - who were the sole provider of blood products in the region prior to the formation of our Community Blood Service - is to ship all blood collected in the region for processing where

it joins their national distribution network. Thus, Western New York blood donors cannot even be certain their donations reach local patients in need.

In keeping blood donation, processing and distribution community-based, Upstate New York Transplant Services will save area institutions as much as 30% per unit of blood and ensure that locally donated blood reaches local patients in need at local hospitals. In addition, to support this expansion, Upstate New York Transplant Services has already added 65 positions based out of our downtown Buffalo headquarters with expectations to add as many as 30-50 more.

Hospitals representing all of Western New York patient care are supporting the initiative, with a gradual phase-in plan to be completed by 2009 – wherein Upstate New York Transplant Services will be supplying blood to all hospitals in the region. Since beginning collections in June, Upstate New York Transplant Services Community Blood Service has already begun supplying all of Niagara and Wyoming County hospitals.

The Community Blood initiative represents two budget goals that are attractive to the state. First, this is a significant health care savings. In reducing the cost of a unit of blood (1 pint) by as much as 30%, the Community Blood Service is projected to save area hospitals a total of \$20 million over the first five years. Second, this is economic development and job-creation. Just as the Community Blood Service is saving hospitals money, in this process we have and have further plans to hire staff, remodel facilities and purchase equipment.

In this process we have stretched the organization financially as far as possible, and with a relatively small investment on the part of the state, New York will be able to bring more job-creation and more cost-savings to hospitals in Western New York. I respectfully ask you to consider becoming as partner in this initiative just as our local hospitals, and I also ask that you give our organization and this initiative its deserved attention in the budget process.

Kindest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark J. Simon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being the most prominent.

Mark J. Simon  
President & CEO  
Upstate New York Transplant Services