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Rep. Primavera introduces stem cell bill

Contributed by: [Representative Dianne Primavera](#) on 3/19/2008

DENVER - On Tuesday, **State Representative Dianne Primavera (D-Broomfield)** announced an exciting new bill aimed at helping fight cancer and other illnesses using adult stem cells. She was joined by **Sheila Gannon**, who was diagnosed with advanced stage leukemia when she was eight months pregnant. Sheila was treated with an adult stem cell transplant at Presbyterian St. Lukes Hospital using umbilical cord blood. The treatment saved her life; two years later, her baby is healthy and she is cancer free.

"Adult stem cell transplants offer incredible hope to thousands of Coloradans and millions of people battling serious illness worldwide," said Rep. Primavera. "As a four-time survivor of cancer, this issue is particularly important to me. We truly have it within our reach to turn medical waste into a life-saving stem cell therapy, and I'm proud to help any way I can."

Cord blood is an excellent source of stem cells, which can be used to treat a broad range of diseases, including leukemia, cerebral palsy and sickle cell anemia. Adult stem cells are simpler to transplant than bone marrow because they do not require perfect matches. They are a particularly potent therapy for leukemia because they have the ability to reconstitute a patient's bone marrow after chemotherapy.

Approximately 8,000 cord blood transplants have been performed world-wide, most of them in the past 10 years. More than 400 cord blood transplants have used units from Colorado, and more than 40 have gone to Coloradan recipients. Colorado is one of only seven states to have a public cord blood bank.

Rep. Primavera's bill is among the first of its kind in the country to support statewide umbilical cord collection efforts. The bill would establish the **Colorado Stem Cells Cure Fund**, which would appear on the Colorado income tax form. The fund would also receive revenue through gifts, grants and donations. Based on the success of other income tax check-offs, the fund could bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars to support collection and awareness efforts.

The fund would help ensure that all new Colorado mothers have the option to donate umbilical cord blood to the Colorado Cord Blood Bank or any other public bank in the state. Those stem cells would in turn be made available to sick patients anywhere in the world.

The program would be administered by the Colorado Department of Health, and would direct the department to facilitate umbilical cord donations and to promote public awareness of how to donate umbilical cords. Most of the revenue from the fund would be directed toward collection efforts at participating hospitals across the state. Hospital participation in the program would be entirely voluntary.

In addition to Sheila Gannon, Rep. Primavera was joined by Dr. Brian Freed, who administers Colorado's public cord blood bank at CU, Dr. Chris Quinones, who is the Medical Director for the CU Cord Blood Bank and a cord blood transplantor, and Dr. Chris Carey, an OB/Gyn at Denver Health who leads cord blood collections efforts for that hospital.

