



LONDON N. BREED

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President London Breed and Supervisors Yee, Tang, Kim, Mar, Peskin, Wiener, and Cohen Asks All 18 to 44 Year Olds to Register as Bone Marrow Donors and Help Close the Racial Gap in Cancer Treatment

San Francisco — On April 5th Board of Supervisors President London Breed will introduce a resolution encouraging all members of the public aged 18 to 44 to register as bone marrow donors to help diversify the donor registry.

“Registering as a bone marrow donor is a simple act that could save someone’s life,” said President Breed. “If you are between 18 and 44, we need your help. And we especially need minorities, whose underrepresentation on the donor registry puts minority cancer patients at an even greater risk.”

“This is personal for me,” added President Breed. “My good friend Jane Yin Bolander is battling Leukemia and needs a donor to save her life. I will do everything I can to help her and people of all ethnicities who are fighting cancer, and I am grateful for everyone who’s joining in this fight.”

“I am so thankful for how much help and support I have received from friends and family,” said Jane Yin Bolander. “It warms my heart to know that total strangers are getting tested to help me and others live. I’m optimistic for the future and can’t wait to be cured.”

Every three minutes someone in America is diagnosed with a blood cancer, and bone marrow transplant is the only proven treatment and long term survival option for over 70 of those cancers. Unfortunately, 70% of patients do not have a fully matched donor in their family and must depend on the kindness of strangers to save their life.

Patients are more likely to match with someone who shares their ethnic background, but minorities, including Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans are dramatically underrepresented in the donor registry. This creates a significant racial gap in bone marrow treatment. According to Be The Match, 16% of Asian or Pacific Islander patients cannot find a donor, and that ratio increases to 17% for Hispanic or Latino patients, and 24% for African Americans. In contrast, only 3% of White patients cannot find a donor.

“Finding a marrow/stem cell match can be like finding a needle in a haystack. You could potentially match anyone in the world, this is truly a global effort.” said Carol Gillespie, Executive Director of the Asian American Donor Program (AADP), a community non-profit organization dedicated to increasing potential stem cell donors, which has registered more than 275,000 Asian Americans on the donor registry.

“This is an issue we need to continue highlighting especially in the Asian Pacific Islander community,” said Supervisor Norman Yee. “I registered years ago when I learned that there are so few Asians signed up as donors – all it takes is one match to save a life. Registering as a donor is quick and easy, but the impact is priceless. You could be saving someone’s mother, father, son, daughter, or loved one.”

“Years ago, I registered as a bone marrow donor, and I encourage everyone to do the same,” said Supervisor Katy Tang. “So many wonderful organizations make it a point to create an easy and fast process to join the registry. I hope many more people will stop to take notice of these efforts and participate the next time they see a donor drive taking place.”

“This is not about helping yourself it’s about helping other people and entire communities who are not represented in the donor registry.” Said Supervisor Malia Cohen. “I applaud President Breed for leading this important effort. Cancer can impact any one of us or any one of our family members. We all need to do more to educate our communities about the benefits and importance of registering as donors.”

President Breed is working with AADP to organize a donor registry drive in the South Light Court of City Hall on Friday, April 8th from 11 am to 2 pm. Parking has been reserved on the South side of Grove Street between Van Ness Avenue and Polk Street so donors can be dropped off or picked up. Registering takes only a few minutes, and if a registered donor matches with a patient in need, the donation is most commonly done via a painless peripheral blood stem cell donation.

“Every life is precious,” said President Breed. “A person’s ethnicity should not determine whether they live or die. We are asking everyone, especially Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans, to come out and register because there is no better gift than the gift of life.”