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My name is Ricardo Corona. I'm very happy that I am alive and able to be here to testify about this important legislation.

If the California Public Health Department had been able to find out that my company was using a chemical that was killing people, I might never have gotten so sick that I had to have a lung transplant.

I was healthy before I started working at Carmi in February 2006. Carmi makes food flavorings for bakeries and other places.

My job was to make the butter flavorings that are sold to food companies.

I was exposed to a lot of dust and powder and so I breathed these things into my lungs when I worked.

And when I worked harder lifting things or working quickly, I breathed in more.

I was not given a mask and the dust was very bad. There were no fans or machines to keep down the dust.

After a short while, I had trouble breathing - it was like I had been running and couldn't catch my breath. I coughed and wheezed.

When I first went to the doctor, I was told I had asthma. They gave me an inhaler.

After a while, I had a harder time breathing. The asthma medicine wasn't working.

The doctor didn't know why. I couldn't help because I didn't know the toxic chemical I worked with caused permanent lung damage.

My employer did not warn me about the very toxic effects on my lungs of this butter flavoring chemical. The label didn't have anything on it.

I didn't get any training. I didn't realize that my problem was relate to my work.

Finally I learned about a chemical called diacetyl. I learned it was causing my lung problems.

But by then it was too late.

I had lost almost all my ability to breathe. The doctors said I lost 80% of my lung capacity. They could not make me better.

I needed a lung transplant to live.

They took me off work and got me on the lung transplant list at UCLA.

And I was lucky enough to get a lung transplant about 2 years ago.

After my lungs were removed in the transplant surgery, the doctors analyzed them at UCLA. They confirmed my small airways were obliterated and I had a very severe case of bronchiolitis obliterans.

I am now living on borrowed time.

I was only exposed for maybe 5 months until July 2006. It was really fast.

If my employer and the workers in our company had been told right away that diacetyl was causing dangerous lung problems, I would not be sitting here today with a transplanted lung.

I hope no one else ever needs to go through what I did.

Workers like me need SB193 so we can get the right information from our employers when the California Health Department learns about a serious problem and reaches our company.

It could have kept me from being exposed to toxic chemicals that caused permanent damage. And it could have helped my doctors to figure out that the chemicals at work were killing me. The doctors could have given me information on how to be protected.

Before I close, please allow me to tell you about my friend Irma Ortiz who is here today. She can't talk to you, because even brief conversation causes her to become very short of breath. So I want to explain her situation too.

We both came all the way up here from southern California to let you know why SB 193 is important.

Irma is 50. She worked at Carmi much longer than I did – for 8 years from 1997 to 2005.

Right now, she is waiting for a lung transplant at UCLA Medical Center.

By 2005 – a couple of months before I got hired on at Carmi, Irma had already lost about 75% of her lungs' ability due to conditions at work. She was also diagnosed with bronchiolitis caused by exposure to diacetyl.

Our medical cases were both reported in the medical literature. Irma was reported as the "index" case of bronchiolitis obliterans in the Southern California flavoring industry.

I was reported to have the most rapid onset of the disease in the world.

Irma married her long-time friend, Victor Mancilla, who gave up his career to care for her.

I hope they find a lung for her and that she gets to live.

We both have a very strong will to live. As I said, I'm on borrowed time, but doing pretty good.

I just don't want others to have to die or be seriously injured when our government knows that something is particularly dangerous and needs to find out where in California the dangerous chemical is being used.

If they find out where the chemical is going here in California, they can find us before we find ourselves in the hospital.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.