

May 11, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate L/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Interim Ranking Member
Senate L/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: FY 2010 HRSA Organ Donation & Transplantation Program Funding

Dear Chairman Harkin and Interim Ranking Member Cochran:

The undersigned organizations representing the “Transplant Roundtable,” a working coalition of transplant patients, professionals, and research foundations, ask you to support a \$10 million funding increase in the FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations (L/HHS) bill for the Division of Transplantation (DoT) within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to implement organ donation and transplantation programs. This increase over the FY 2009 spending level comports with an identical provision in this year’s FY 2010 Senate Budget Resolution.

Your efforts on the FY 2009 L/HHS bill secured a first funding increase in many years for these programs—a meaningful new step to decreasing the lengthy organ donor waiting lists. With these funds, DoT will be able to fund important organ donation and transplantation programs under its jurisdiction, including:

- Reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses for living donors whose low incomes may otherwise prohibit them from being able to donate (as a result of which over 189 living donations have been done since the program began in October 2007),
- Grants to test and replicate new approaches for increasing organ donation, promote public awareness about organ donation and support the development and improvement of state donor registries,
- Public and professional education and outreach designed to increase organ donation,
- Research to better define the organ donor potential in the United States,
- Efforts to sustain and improve upon the increased number of viable organs for transplantation as a result of breakthrough collaboratives,
- Operation and improvement of the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) to allocate and distribute donor organs to individuals waiting for a transplant,
- Validation and implementation of a uniform donor history questionnaire, and
- Expansion of paired kidney donation opportunities at multiple transplant facilities.

However, it is simply not possible for the HRSA DoT to achieve more than modest change in these areas without further Congressional support and dedicated funding. Only with adequate funding will the federal government, states and other public and private entities be able to expand their current organ donation efforts and create new, effective organ donation programs.

On behalf of organ donors and transplant recipients, we appreciate your leadership in securing these funds for the FY 2009 bill. We look forward to working with you to significantly increase funding for these programs in FY 2010. Thank you again for your past support and for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American Association of Kidney Patients
American Association of Tissue Banks
American Liver Foundation
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Society of Transplant Surgeons
American Society of Transplantation
Association of Organ Procurement Organizations
Eye Bank Association of America
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
NATCO, The Organization for Transplant Professionals
National Kidney Foundation
Renal Physicians Association
Transplant Recipients International Organization
United Network for Organ Sharing