



January 29, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Health Care

From: The Association of Organ Procurement Organizations

RE: Oppose SB 144

Diane Brockmeier, Missouri
President

Kelly Ranum, Louisiana
President-Elect

Ron Squires, Oklahoma
Medical Advisor

Harry Wilkins, MD, Kansas
Medical Advisor-Elect

Kirk Mizelle, North Carolina
Secretary/Treasurer

Gordon Bowen, Ohio
At Large Member

Charlie Alexander, Maryland
Immediate Past-President

Elling Eidbo, Virginia
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO), representing the nation's 58 federally designated organ donation agencies, we write to you today to express our concern regarding Oregon SB 144. Organ Procurement Organizations (OPOs), like the Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank (PNTB), are federally regulated under the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) non-profit agencies that manage and coordinate state and national organ donation registry systems and provide human organs and tissues for life-saving transplants.

AOPO is writing to oppose SB 144 because we believe the proposed changes to the registry could have devastating impacts not only on the state of Oregon's lifesaving Donor Registry, but on the potential lives saved and healed by transplantation. Further, the changes proposed by SB 144 stand as a precedent to what could similarly befall the entire country, thus potentially impacting thousands of lives.

Oregon currently has one of the most robust registries in the nation, with more than 2.5 million Oregonians authorized for organ, eye, and tissue donation. 63% of actual organ donors last year were registered. This bill, if adopted, would single-handedly destroy this enormous success by requiring current registries, including that in Oregon, to be dismantled and rebuilt because registry participants have not authorized whole body donation. To meet the ethical obligations of a registry that included organ, eye, tissue and whole body donation, Oregon, and subsequently, the nation, would potentially need to create and deploy entirely new systems for registration, notification and education. There is no doubt this would result in a reduction of the number of people who have opted to donate organs, at a time when there is intense focus across the nation and on all levels of government about the organ shortage across America.

SB 144, crafted without any research or studies on the societal or healthcare impact to the state of Oregon and its current system, grants for-profit body donation companies access to the registry related to organ, eye, and tissue procurement for transplant. Organ, eye, and tissue donation for transplant, and donation of bodies for education and research, are two separate considerations. Combining the two, in the absence of education and research, will ultimately lead people to consider not donating at all, resulting in deaths on the local and national waiting lists. This action could cause potential regulatory conflicts as well.

Body donation for research is distinct from organ donation, the lifesaving process that enables surgeons to transplant donated hearts, livers, lungs and kidneys. It is also different from the recovery of tissue to restore wholeness and mobility. These practices are strictly regulated by the U.S. government. Selling organs, eyes, and tissue for transplant is also against federal and state law. The donation of a whole body for research happens in a separate context in the aftermath of death, requiring discussion, planning, and separate consents.

Donor information in the registry is currently stored in a secure database, accessible only to authorized organ, eye, and tissue recovery personnel. The law prohibits donor registry information from being shared with any company or government agency. Redefining the meaning of procurement organizations to include body donation organizations would violate the trust that has been built with the public since the inception of the donor registry.

AOPO and its members are supportive of research and education, however, not at the expense of saving lives through transplantation. OPOs across the nation work closely with organizations who need organs, tissues, and bodies to facilitate research and education, and they are in persistent pursuit of opportunities for improvement in all areas. However, this legislative revision to the Oregon Donor Registry is not an improvement, but creates confusion, potential conflicts in regulation, and threatens the lifesaving mission of the registry. That is why we oppose SB 144.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diane Brockmeier".

Diane Brockmeier
AOPO President