

University Studies

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Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

March 16, 2019

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Health Care Committee Members,

I write to you today as a living kidney donor and life-long Oregonian in support of SB 796 and benefit protection for living organ donors.

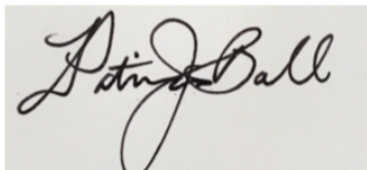
Over ten years ago, in July 2008, I underwent a voluntary nephrectomy and donated my left kidney to my youngest sister, Roberta. Her need for a kidney transplant had first been identified by Roberta's doctors nearly eight years earlier. Like thousands of others in need, her name was then added to the list on which patients wait an average five years while dearly hoping to avoid becoming one of the 20+ Americans who die each year while waiting for a transplant.

When I first learned of my sister's need, I was not able to donate a kidney. As a single mother struggling to provide for my three young children, I could afford neither the resulting lost income nor the risk of lost benefits. Ultimately, after working to establish a strong support system for myself and my children, I was able to donate my kidney. And in 2011, I created the only capstone class on the topic of organ donation at Portland State University. My students (270 to date) work with the nonprofit agency Donate Life Northwest (DLNW) while learning about their mission to save and enhance lives through the promotion of organ, eye, and tissue donation, and to increase registration of voluntary organ donors in the Pacific Northwest. The most common question in class? *Why don't more people donate their kidneys during life?*

The waiting list for donated organs continues to grow nationwide. But the wait list for kidneys could potentially be eradicated if one in 10,000 individuals were to volunteer as living kidney donors. SB 796 can help this happen by revising Oregon employment statutes to include living organ donation as acceptable "family leave" covered by employers; by preventing insurance companies from declining or limiting coverage to a person for a life insurance, health insurance, or long-term care insurance policy based on their status as a living donor; and by preventing insurance companies from considering a person's status as a living organ donor when determining premium rates for their health plan.

On behalf of the current 851 transplant candidates waiting for an organ donor in Oregon, and for all those who will one day join the ever-growing wait list, I urge you to support this legislation and pass Senate Bill 796 to protect living organ donors and eliminate barriers to living donation.

Sincerely,



Patrice Morris Ball
Senior Adjunct Instructor