



PO Box 532 Portland Oregon 97207 503.494.7888 1.800.452.1369 www.donatelifenw.org

March 18, 2019

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the Senate Committee on Health Care,

I am writing in support of SB 796, relating to benefit protection for living organ donors.

Donate Life Northwest was formed in 1975 from a coalition of non-profit organ, eye and tissue procurement agencies to collaboratively increase the local donor pool to save more lives through transplant. As the stewards of the organ donor registry in Oregon, Donate Life Northwest has the responsibility to broadly and adequately educate the public about donation and transplantation so that all Oregonians have the knowledge needed to make an informed decision. We work on behalf of local organ, eye and tissue procurement organizations and transplant centers to grow the donor registry for the state, and ultimately save more lives. We also work on behalf of thousands of people in Oregon whose lives have been saved by transplant.

In 2015, we created a program called Erase the Wait, which aims to help wait listed kidney patients find a living donor. As a result of this program, eight people have received living donor transplants. Even though our program has been very successful, only 68 out of the 338 transplants in Oregon last year resulted from living donors.

Nation-wide nearly 80% of organ donations occur through deceased donors. This means patients may wait on average five years or more before receiving a transplant. Every day, 22 people die while waiting for a transplant nationwide. Living donation not only helps the individual who receives the transplant, but also frees up an organ for the next person on the waiting list. The waiting list continues to grow, and a key way we can affect change is through living donation. If one in 10,000 individuals were to donate a kidney, we could potentially eradicate the waiting list for kidneys. In Oregon, we need more education and support for our living donors.

SB 796 would address many challenges that face living donors and promote living donation by:

- Revising Oregon employment statutes to include living organ donation as acceptable "family leave" covered by employers
- Preventing insurance companies from declining or limiting coverage to a person for a life insurance policy, health insurance policy or long-term care insurance policy based on their status as a living donor
- 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, we ask that you support this impactful legislation. We urge you to pass Senate Bill 796, which protects living organ donors and eliminates barriers to living donation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leslie Brock".

Leslie Brock
Executive Director
Donate Life Northwest