

Hello, my name is Jessica Hightower and I have spent my entire life battling with kidney disease. I was born with one kidney that functioned at 35% and diagnosed with a rare kidney disease called Branchio-oto-renal syndrome. I spent my childhood in and out of doctor offices. They said I would need a transplant by the age of 11. Well that age came and no transplant. Then my sophomore year of high school I was started on dialysis. In 1996 I got a transplant the last thing on a 14 year old's (is that how old you were?) mind is how am I and my family going to afford the medications that keep my kidney transplant working. My biggest thought was FINALLY, I get a kidney and can start living a normal high school life. Years later, I wasn't able to afford my transplant medications. Being 19 barely making enough for my day to day bills and I was expected to pay 2500-3800 a month to keep something that was keeping me alive. I ended up going into rejection. Lucky I was able to get to a hospital and they were able to save the kidney and get funding for medications. Without that funding I would have lost that kidney way before its time was up. A transplant kidney typically only lasts 13 years and I had mine 17 years, I am currently on peritoneal dialysis. I need to dialyze 3-4 times a day and each exchange is 1 hour plus. That makes it impossible for me to have a job...

My only income is my disability, and that comes only once a month, and that isn't even enough for me to live. Sometimes, well a lot of times I go without so I can pay the bill I didn't pay last month. Without that's charitable assistance I wouldn't be able to have a roof over my head. If I didn't have it I'd probably be homeless.

I think it would be detrimental to not only myself but to others who are even more sick of all the charitable assistance funding were to end. It could mean less dialysis clinics, less money for patients, less ones for transplants and the nurses and doctors that help take care of the chronically ill.