

Testimony – House Bill 41

Committee – March 5, 2019

G. Kent Holloway

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Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Boggs, members of the committee and guests, thank you for the opportunity to give proponent testimony today in support of House Bill 41.

My name is Kent Holloway and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Lifeline of Ohio, the federally designated organ procurement organization serving Central and Southeastern Ohio. We facilitate the donation and recovery of organs, eyes and tissue after death for 38 counties in Ohio and 2 counties in West Virginia.

Ohio has thousands of citizens on the national organ transplant waiting list. Today, 113,631 Americans -- including 3,079 Ohioans -- are desperately waiting for an organ transplant. That list includes men, women and children. Mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters -- all hoping for a second chance at a healthy future. For many, the chance to live a full life will not be realized unless many more people consider organ donation. Statistically, one Ohioan dies every other day waiting for a lifesaving gift. However, there is something that Ohio can do to make a difference. Ohio can become a more donor friendly state.

Of the 3,000 plus Ohioans waiting for an organ transplant, 2,258 are waiting for a kidney transplant. The average wait time in Ohio for a kidney transplant can exceed 4 years. And while dialysis can sustain an individual during the wait; being tethered to a dialysis machine every other day for 4 hours at a time can take a toll on one's health and quality of life. For most of the people on the kidney waiting list -- finding a living donor is their best -- maybe their only -- option for a second chance.

In Ohio we have seen living donation level out over the last decade. Last year there were 677 transplants performed at transplant centers in Ohio -- 251 happened thanks to the generosity of a living donor. About average for what Ohio transplant centers have been facilitating recently, but not nearly enough.

Twelve years ago Ohio was one of a group of states that led the way in acknowledging the priceless gift of organ donation by passing House Bill 25, allowing living organ donors the ability to deduct the non-medical expenses related to the donation from their state taxes. It's time to step up again and continue the tradition of encouraging Ohioans to consider organ donation -- both living and deceased.

House Bill 41 assists in the organ donation process by prohibiting health insurance companies from discriminating against individuals who have agreed to save a life by being a living donor. Under the legislation, insurers cannot discriminate against these donors when offering life, disability, or long-term care insurance policies.

While Lifeline of Ohio is specifically involved in the facilitation of deceased donation, our mission is to empower the community to save and heal lives through all types of donation; and that includes eliminating any and all barriers that may keep people from donating as deceased -- or living -- donor.

The kidney is the most common organ that is donated by a living person. However, it's also possible to donate part of your liver, pancreas, lung, or intestine.

From a financial perspective, transplant is a more responsible choice when an organ is available. Considering Medicare is extended to a person of any age who requires dialysis, the nearly 750,000 people living with end stage renal disease make up 1% of the US Medicare Population, but account for roughly 7% of the Medicare budget. And the number of patients diagnosed with end-stage renal disease is increasing by 5% each year. The average cost for Hemodialysis is \$89,000 annually per patient. A kidney transplant is \$32,000 for the surgery and approximately \$25,000 annually for care and anti-rejection medication.

Additionally, recipients of living organ donor kidneys have demonstrated increased survival rates. There often is a better tissue match between the living donor and the recipient. National statistics indicate about a 10 percent increased success rate at one year for living donation.

The transplant surgery from a living donor can also be scheduled at a mutually-agreed upon time when both donor and potential recipient are in optimum health, rather than performed as an emergency operation when a deceased match becomes available.

Members of the committee, I ask you to recognize the precious and selfless human gift that every donor offers. Each deceased donor has the potential of saving and enhancing up to 50 lives. Last year, 431 Ohioans were organ donors at the time of their death. Thousands of Ohioans are in need of donated corneas to restore sight; bone and other tissues to repair injured or diseased bones and joints; skin to heal burns; and donated heart valves to replace those that are diseased.

But as I recount those numbers, we must recognize that donation is really about the ones. One very generous and compassionate person making the decision to give the life-saving gift of an organ to another. Let's not let anything – particularly fear of future discrimination – stand in the way of that process in our state.

Ohio is home to some of the best transplant centers in the world. It is now time to help make Ohio a donor friendly state as well. I thank you, once again, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of House Bill 41 and welcome any questions.