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Sponsor Testimony House Bill 332
Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
February 27th, 2018

Chairman Burke, Vice-Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and Members of the Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 332, which would ensure that individuals with disabilities will not be banned from an organ transplant waitlist solely based on their disability.

This bill stemmed from the discrimination that individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities face in relation to organ transplant waitlists. According to a 2013 report by the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), individuals with mental and physical disabilities have historically been denied life-saving organ transplants based on assumptions that their lives are less worthy, that they are incapable of complying with post-transplant medical regimens, or that they lack adequate support systems to ensure such compliance.

Ohio residents in need of organ transplants are entitled to assurances that they will not encounter discrimination based on a disability. A physical or intellectual disability should not bar someone from life-saving healthcare. As well, those living with disabilities like Down syndrome and autism can live full and joyful lives and should not be denied a transplant on a medical basis.

Five states (Pennsylvania, Maryland, California, New Jersey, and Massachusetts) have passed similar bipartisan legislation to prevent organ transplant waitlist discrimination, and 3 more (Kansas, Delaware, and Oregon) currently have bills working their way through state legislatures. Ohioans living with disabilities deserve to be at the forefront as well for equal consideration. Right now, transplant programs in Ohio either have unclear policies on the issue, or have no written policies at all. This type of discrimination occurs because of lack of legislation on the issue, and we need to close that gap to prevent individuals with disabilities from being denied the transplants that they need. House Bill 332 would create a solution to this by ensuring these individuals with disabilities will receive the same treatment on organ transplant waitlists as everyone else.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 332. I would be happy to take any questions.