

Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Hackett, for the opportunity to speak in support of the Living Donor Protection Act, House Bill 188. I'm Michael Stevenson, and I am fortunate to have a brother who was willing to donate his kidney to save my life.

I am testifying today as a Board Member of the National Kidney Foundation and for living organ donors like my brother.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects more than 30 million Americans, approximately 90% of those with kidney disease don't even know they have it. Ohio has nearly 156,000 Medicare patients with kidney disease, nearly 13,000 of them are on dialysis, and 2,250 are waiting for a kidney transplant. Last year, 1,138 Ohioans received a transplant, half of those currently hoping for the gift of life.. We need to do more to remove barriers to organ donation to help those who want to save another's life are not penalized or prevented from doing so.

Patients, like myself, seeking a transplant talk to their family, friends, colleagues, and even total strangers. I was fortunate my brother was willing and able to donate. To do so, he had to go through extensive testing that took weeks and are in better health than your average American. Organ donation is safe to donors and they go on to live long, healthy and productive lives. However, sometimes donors get hit by "penalties" after donation. In this case, some face discrimination in obtaining insurance, including life, long-term care, and disability insurance.

A study by Johns Hopkins University of their donors showed that a quarter of living donors who tried to obtain or change their life insurance faced discrimination because they were organ donors. Let me share one from a fellow board member.

My brother was recently updating his family will and decided he needed more life insurance. He was denied coverage because he is a living donor. Even though our transplant occurred 25 years ago and he is in excellent health, the insurance carrier still denied coverage. This came as a complete surprise to him.

We should be encouraging living organ donation, not discouraging it. We need to protect donors from future harm. People, like my brother, who saved another's life shouldn't have to worry about being penalized or discriminated against.

This bill will not only help protect organ donors and improve the lives of kidney patients receiving donations, but also help save the healthcare system. While we do not have cost data for commercial plans or Medicaid, consider that Medicare saves more than \$60,000 per patient per year when a person stops dialysis and receives a transplant.

This bill would prohibit discrimination against living organ donors based solely on their status as an organ donor. Ohio has shown itself to be very supportive of organ donation. It has passed into law a tax deduction to assist donors in recouping expenses related to donation. Ohio also offers state employees paid leave. Let's not stop there.

I request you continue this by supporting House Bill 188. Tell potential donors in Ohio that you want to protect them and saving the life of an Ohioan shouldn't cause them to worry about their future. Living organ donors should not be penalized for their altruistic act to help a friend or family member in need.