

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 8, 2019

Dear Secretary Azar,

We write to applaud your ongoing work to increase living organ donation in the United States, and we wish to share our commitment to working with you on this vital issue. At the end of 2016, there were 726,331 people living with end stage renal disease (ESRD) and an estimated 30 million adults with some form of chronic kidney disease (CKD). Kidney transplantation is the most effective therapy for kidney failure, the ultimate outcome for many with CKD.

We were very pleased to see the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA's) Healthcare Systems Bureau advance, "Lost Wages Support for Living Organ Donors Demonstration Project" (HRSA-19-069). We support further action to provide lost wages support, such as expanding the scope of the National Living Donor Assistance Center (NLDAC). The fear of unemployment or taking unpaid time off from work is a common reason cited by those who choose not to donate and is a significant disincentive to organ donation.

As you know, NLDAC provides approximately \$1.9 million each year to reimburse travel expenses for eligible applicants. Last year, the program received over 1000 applications for assistance and nearly 9 out of 10 applications were approved. Importantly, 75% of these donors indicated that they would not have been able to donate without the assistance provided by NLDAC. A recent peer-reviewed study found that for each \$1 spent on the program it yielded \$28 in Medicare savings in dialysis costs.

It is our understanding that *The Organ Donation and Recovery Improvement Act* (P.L. 108-216) would allow NLDAC to be expanded to cover lost wages and other non-travel expenses of donation. If the purview of the NLDAC were to be expanded, for example, to cover lost wages, childcare, and other unreimbursed expenses incurred by a living donor, more individuals could donate and more transplants could occur saving valuable lives. We would like to work with you toward that end.

We thank you for your work to increase living donation and to address barriers that living donors face. We stand ready to work with you on strengthening the NLDAC, as well as other ways to remove disincentives so that more Americans will consider giving the gift of life, through living organ donation.

Sincerely,


Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress


Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress




Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Bobby Rush
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



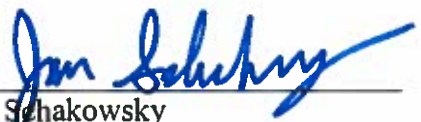
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Eliot Engel
Member of Congress



Greg Gianforte
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



John Lewis
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Pete Visdosky
Member of Congress



Pete King
Member of Congress



Suzan DeBene
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



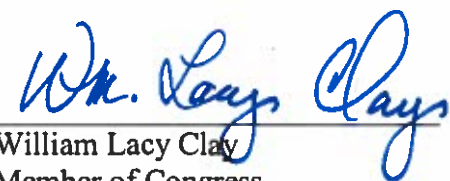
Tom Cole
Member of Congress



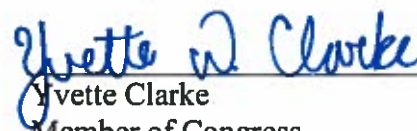
Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress



William Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



Yvette Clarke
Member of Congress