

January 18, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, & Transportation
United States Senate
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, & Transportation
United States Senate
167 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chair, U.S. House Committee on
Transportation & Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on
Transportation & Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, Chair Graves, and Ranking Member Larsen:

As stakeholders in the organ donation and transplant community, we appreciate your leadership in including an organ transportation provision in the House and Senate Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization legislation to ensure lifesaving donor organs are transported safely, timely, and efficiently through our nation's commercial airline system. We urge Congress to advance in any final FAA reauthorization bill a provision that requires federal rulemaking to enable the transportation of a donated organ in the passenger cabin instead of in the cargo hold of a commercial airplane.

As we shared in our June 2023 letter, before the attacks on September 11, organs intended for transplant traveled in the passenger cabin on commercial flights. Due to protocol changes after the September 11 attacks, unaccompanied organs were relegated to cargo and are still transported as such today.

The nature of organ donation and transplantation is time sensitive, and transporting organs by cargo involves time-intensive logistical planning. Time-limited organs must be transported at all hours of the day. For example, organs being transported by cargo often must be at the airport 60 to 120 minutes before departure. If an organ arrives at the airport after this cut off, the organ cannot be transported on that flight. Additionally, cargo offices have highly variable opening hours, and if an organ arrives at its destination, but the cargo office is closed, it cannot be collected by a courier. While not a common occurrence, logistical delays heighten the risk that an organ cannot be transplanted.

Ensuring that federal protocols are modernized to reduce the risk of damage or delay of donor organs will benefit transplant candidates and honor the lifesaving gifts of organ donors.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the nation's organ donation and transplantation system.

Sincerely,

American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP)
American Foundation for Donation and Transplantation (AFDT)
American Kidney Fund (AKF)

American Society for Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics (ASHI)
American Society of Nephrology (ASN)
American Society of Transplantation (AST)
American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS)
Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO)
Donate Life America (DLA)
Donate Life Virginia
Kidney Care Partners (KCP)
Kidney Transplant Collaborative (KTC)
National Kidney Foundation (NKF)
Nationwide Organ Recovery Transport Alliance (NORA)
North American Transplant Coordinators Organization (NATCO)
Organ Donation Advocacy Group (ODAG)
Renal Physicians Association (RPA)
Transplant Families
Transplant Unwrapped
Transplant Recipients International Organization (TRIO)
United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS)
Waitlist Zero

CC: Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
House Speaker Mike Johnson
House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries