

June 2, 2021

The Honorable John R. Bradford, III, The Honorable Mitchell S. Setzer, The Honorable John Szoka -- Senior Chairs

The Honorable Keith Kidwell, The Honorable Michael H. Wray -- Chairs

The Honorable Steve Tyson, The Honorable Harry Warren, The Honorable Jeff Zenger -- Vice Chairs

Members

House Finance Committee

North Carolina General Assembly

RE: HB 71 - SUPPORT

Dear Senior Chairs, Chairs, Vice Chairs and Members of the Committee:

My name is Angela Gaskell. I am a resident of Southern Pines, a former dialysis patient and recipient of a kidney transplant in the fall of 2019. I am also a volunteer Patient Ambassador for Dialysis Patient Citizens (DPC).

Founded in 2004, DPC is a nationwide, nonprofit, patient-led organization dedicated to improving the lives of End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) patients by advocating for favorable public policy to support dialysis patient needs and improve patient outcomes. Our policies and mission are guided solely by our membership, which is open to all patients and their families, and our volunteer Board consisting entirely of ESRD patients.

Today I write on behalf of the more than 22,000 North Carolinians with ESRDⁱ to ask for your support of HB 71, which would help remove existing barriers to organ transplants so that more ESRD patients could receive a kidney transplant from a living donor. Patients with kidney failure must receive dialysis treatment three or more times per week or receive a kidney transplant just to survive. Of the nearly half a million ESRD patients nationwide who are receiving dialysis, approximately 100,000 of them are currently awaiting a kidney transplant. Of these, more than 3,000 North Caroliniansⁱⁱ are currently awaiting a kidney transplant.

Living kidney donors are desperately needed because the number of ESRD patients waiting for a transplant is far greater than the number of kidneys that become available for transplant through deceased donor matches alone. In addition to increasing the supply of kidneys available for transplant, living kidney donations can significantly decrease the wait time for patients to receive a transplant, thus reducing the number of patient deaths among those waiting for a transplant and lowering health care costs of prolonged dialysis treatments.

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How will HB 71 help North Carolinians who are awaiting kidney transplant? In order to expand the number of kidneys available for transplant, more people need to make the choice to become a living kidney donor. However, even when someone wants to donate a kidney they often face multiple financial barriers that keep them from going through with their lifesaving organ donation. HB 71 addresses these financial barriers by offering meaningful support in three ways:

- Prohibiting discrimination of living organ donors by insurance companies who offer “health benefit plans and life, accident and health, accident, disability, disability income, and long-term care insurance policies” from charging higher rates, denying coverage and other actions,
- Providing a tax credit up to \$5,000 to living organ donors that helps defray organ donation expenses, and
- Paid leave for state employees and state-supported personnel

I urge you to support HB 71 that removes some of the financial barriers that prevents ESRD patients from receiving a life-saving kidney transplant.

Sincerely,



Angela Gaskell
Resident of Southern Pines, NC, Moore County

ⁱ U.S. Renal Data System

ⁱⁱ <https://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/data/view-data-reports/state-data/>