

House Committee on State Government & Elections  
82 Smith Street, room 101  
Providence, RI 02908

April 9, 2024

Re: Testimony in Support of H8009

To members of the committee,

In the tumultuous year of 2020, I found myself grappling with the harrowing reality of end-stage renal failure, a condition that left me teetering on the precipice of life and death. Having undergone numerous major surgeries, my body was weary and weakened, and the prospect of survival hinged precariously upon the possibility of receiving a kidney transplant. Thus, I embarked upon the arduous journey of joining the waiting list, where the hope of securing a kidney—whether from a deceased or living donor—loomed as a beacon of possibility in an otherwise bleak landscape.

However, the stark reality of this wait was sobering; the prospect of enduring a minimum seven-year wait while undergoing thrice-weekly dialysis treatments cast a shadow over my hopes. The relentless demands of dialysis not only exacted a physical toll, draining my vitality with each passing day, but also imposed severe limitations on my ability to lead a normal life. Gainful employment seemed an elusive dream, overshadowed by the exigencies of treatment schedules that rendered any semblance of routine or stability unattainable. The dialysis regimen, though essential, offered only a fraction of the renal function necessary for sustaining life, leaving my body in a precarious state of decline.

In my quest for a lifeline, I turned to a vast network of familial ties, friendships, and even the kindness of strangers, beseeching them to undergo testing in the hopes of finding a compatible live kidney donor. Yet, amidst this fervent search, I encountered a common apprehension among potential donors—a concern not only for their own well-being but also for the practicalities of recovery and sustenance during the post-operative period.

It was amidst this sea of uncertainty that a ray of hope emerged in the form of a selfless, working single mother of six. In a remarkable act of altruism, she offered the gift of life by donating one of her kidneys, thereby not only saving my life but also alleviating the anguish of my loved ones. Despite the sacrifices entailed, she took a mere two weeks' hiatus from her responsibilities to recuperate from the surgery—a testament to her unwavering generosity and compassion. However, it is impossible to overlook the profound impact that financial constraints had on her recovery journey, as the specter of lost wages and the absence of adequate support systems loomed large.

Through heartfelt conversations with my donor, I have come to appreciate the pressing need for concerted action on the part of both individuals and policymakers to champion the cause of organ donation and support the unsung heroes who selflessly offer the gift of life. Indeed, the ramifications of live organ donation extend far beyond the realm of individual lives saved, encompassing profound societal benefits such as reduced healthcare costs and enhanced productivity.

As I stand on the precipice of renewed life, I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to share my testimony and advocate for the urgent reforms necessary to facilitate organ donation and support the noble endeavors of those who embody the spirit of selflessness and compassion. In doing so, we not only honor the invaluable contributions of organ

---

donors but also pave the way for a future where the gift of life is cherished and safeguarded for generations to come.

I strongly urge passage of H8009 to ease the burden for people to make one of the most altruistic decisions one can, to donate an organ to someone like me in need.

Sincerely,

Bunny Ssengooba  
Healthcare Advocate  
Kidney Recipient  
Rumford, RI