

Greetings Committee Members,

My name is John-Michael Keyes, citizen, residing in Evergreen, Colorado. In absentia, I offer this letter in support of The Emily Maureen Ellen Keyes Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Fund.

A little history... On September 27th, 2006 a gunman entered Platte Canyon High School, held seven girls hostage and ultimately shot and killed my daughter, Emily Keyes. During the time she was held hostage Emily sent my wife Ellen and me these text messages: "I love you guys" and "I love u guys. k?"

That evening at the hospital we were presented with organ donation paperwork. Here's where it gets interesting. You see, Ellen and I had spoken with Emily, and her twin brother Casey, about organ donation. Over dinner, here and there, it was an occasional family conversation. And really, it was about preparing our kids for some of the expectations as Ellen and I faced mortality.

When Emily got her learner's permit she was tremendously excited. I remember working on the computer and Emily came into my office to show me her permit. I noticed the heart and said, "So you decided to be an organ donor." She said, "Yea Dad. It's easy. Like recycling." She had an infectious laugh.

But as a minor, Ellen and I could have over-ridden Emily's decision. Instead, that night at St. Anthony's, we signed the donor paperwork.

For those who haven't experienced it, it may be hard to understand the nature of "The Gift." Because the gift of organ donation isn't simply about a donor and the recipient. It's about families and cousins and friends and strangers. One of Emily's cousin's was born with a heart defect. He is here today because of a donor. (We do call him "Karl the Death Cheater. He had another survival moment during the floods at Philmont Scout Ranch. But that's a different story.)

Organ donation is a complex gift. Complex because it brings slivers of joy, from tragedy. One of Emily's recipients requested a conversation. Anonymity is important, but there is a process if both recipient and donor family agree. My first conversation with Julius Britto, retired New York City cop, was a glimpse of joy. He regained the gift of sight from one of Emily's corneas.

And those truly are stories of joy. Life saving. Life changing. Remarkable. Joy.

Today in Colorado, nearly 70% of driver license and ID card holders are registered as donors. Another "Remarkable."

I support House Bill 17-1027. It is a natural evolution. Donor Alliance has proven to be a responsible steward. Removing the sunset makes sense. Keeping the Audit makes sense. Having the State Auditor do it makes sense. Please don't burden Donor Alliance with the expense of an audit.

While every story is relevant, "Awareness" must be kept contemporary. My family has been honored to have the fund named after our daughter for the last decade. If there is a consideration, rely on Donor Alliance. If there is point where "Awareness" could expand by re-examining the fund name... pay attention.

I may have exceeded my minutes. But I hope we can end on a quote I use on a frequent basis.

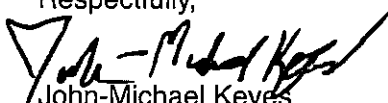
Peace.

It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work.

It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.

I love you guys.

Respectfully,


John-Michael Keyes