

House Health & Human Services

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HB24-1132 Support for Living Organ Donors

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Chelsea Barker For themselves	<p>Members of the Committee, my name is Chelsea Barker. I live in Denver, and just over two years ago, I donated my right kidney to a stranger. Donating my kidney was a powerful, emotional experience, and I would do it again in heartbeat, if I could. Today I'm testifying in support of the CARE for Living Donors Act.</p> <p>I was inspired to donate because of my mom's father, whom we called Poppy. When I was 12, he fell ill with a type of blood cancer. If he had been a little younger or healthier, he could have been a candidate for a bone marrow transplant. Instead, this experience sparked an interest in me to become the person who might help someone else's loved one, the way I wish it could have worked out for my Poppy.</p> <p>When I got older, I proudly joined the bone marrow transplant list. To this day, I've never been called up. But when I saw an ad at a bus station looking for living kidney donors, I knew I could give back and honor Pop's memory another way. When I donated, I was able to take advantage of several protections available to living kidney donors through a program that Porter Transplant participates in. As a young professional working at a small non-profit, I did not have 2-3 weeks of PTO available to me to use. Going without income or a diminished salary would not have worked for my family. The protections and immediate financial support, including lost wage reimbursement, made it possible for me to donate. However, not all donors in Colorado have access to these protections.</p> <p>I support the CARE for Living Donors Act because it would make it possible for more Coloradans to say yes to becoming a living donor. Please vote to pass this bill and help more Coloradans save lives. Thank you.</p>
Mark Hellberg For themselves	<p>My name is Mark Hellberg. I live in Broomfield, Colorado. I am a living kidney donor (donated 2 years ago) and a 66 year old grandparent of two amazing (aren't all grandchildren amazing) grandchildren who live in Erie Colorado. This is how I became to be a living kidney donor. I had a friend, also a grandparent, who had end stage kidney disease and was undergoing</p>

	<p>dialysis. This meant she had to go to a dialysis clinic for 4 hour sessions 3 days a week. The dialysis session helped her survive. She never felt good, she just felt less bad. Unfortunately, her grandchildren live a significant distance away which made it impossible for her to see her grandchildren.</p> <p>Covid taught my wife and I how terrible it was not to be able to see our grandchildren. We couldn't imagine how hard it must be for our friend and her family. The decision to offer to help was a no brainer for us. Initial screening determined I was not a direct match. I thought this was the end, but the donation coordinator told me about the voucher process. I would donate to somebody I didn't know, and my friend would be prioritized on the living donor list. Although it is impossible due to matching challenges to provide a firm number, we were told her wait would be reduced to 2-4 months from 5-10 years! My wife and I decided to continue the process. Family and especially grandchildren are such a gift – how could we make any other decision. I qualified and donated a kidney just over two years ago. The surgery went well, and the recovery was easy. My donated kidney was implanted and did what a kidney is supposed to do. Good news. More good news, because of the voucher, my friend received a kidney from a living kidney donor within months of my donation and got her life back. She is now able to enjoy her grandchildren.</p> <p>I was fortunate, I was able to take the time for the surgery and recovery. There are many grandparents and grandchildren that are not as fortunate as our grandchildren. They are unable to get together and enjoy that precious time together because either the grandparent or grandchild is tethered to the dialysis process. The CARE for Living Donors Act lowers the barrier to living kidney donation. By providing protection from workplace discrimination and a tax credit to donors, more people will be able to make the gift of life without fear of incurring an economic burden. For me this Act simply means that more grandparents and grandchildren get to enjoy time together. How amazing is that?</p>
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