

August 31, 2020

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Pass S. 3353/H.R. 5534, the Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The following 43 national kidney patient and organ transplant advocacy organizations respectfully urge you to include S. 3353/H.R. 5534, the Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act in a year-end funding, COVID-relief or Medicare extenders package. This non-controversial, bipartisan legislation would save lives and reduce Medicare spending by ensuring transplant patients have access to life-saving immunosuppressive medications. Recently, CBO issued a preliminary report indicating that the bill would result in an estimated net savings of \$70 million over ten years.

Medicare Part B coverage of immunosuppressive drugs ends 36 months post-transplant for non-aged, non-disabled kidney recipients. Many patients lack affordable coverage when their Medicare ends and are forced to ration or forgo their medications altogether. Some kidney patients do not try to get a transplant due to fear they will have difficulty maintaining access to the immunosuppressive drugs. This narrowly crafted bill covers immunosuppressive medications only, and only if the transplant recipient lacks private or other public coverage for these drugs.

In addition to being the gold standard in care for patients with End Stage Kidney Disease, transplantation is less expensive than dialysis. Medicare spends approximately \$90,000 per year on each dialysis patient whereas Medicare expenses for a transplant recipient after the first year of transplant are approximately \$35,000. Furthermore, Part B immunosuppressive drug spending is only \$2,300 per patient, per year. It defies common sense for Medicare to cover a kidney transplant but then risk the health and longevity of that transplant by stopping immunosuppressive coverage after 36 months. The current Medicare policy is unfair to patients, living donors, and donor families. If the transplant fails, patients resume Medicare eligibility for dialysis or another transplant, adding costs to the federal government and adding another name to a kidney wait list that already includes almost 100,000 Americans.

Led in the Senate by Senators Cassidy (R-LA) and Durbin (D-IL), and in the House by Representatives Kind (D-WI) and Burgess (R-TX), this bipartisan, non-controversial legislation is ready to move. The bill was reported out favorably by the House Energy and Commerce Committee, receiving praise and support from both sides of the aisle. Extending the current immunosuppressive coverage policy is the right thing to do—it will save lives and reduce Medicare spending. We urge you to please pass this bill via any moving legislative vehicle before the end of this Congress.

Please contact Lauren Drew at lauren.drew@kidney.org with any additional questions about this or other kidney community legislative priorities.

Sincerely,

Alport Syndrome Foundation
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Society of Nephrology
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology
American Transplant Foundation
Association of Organ Procurement Organizations
Dialysis Patient Citizens
Donate Life – WoMen Encouraging Living
Donation
Donate Life America
Donate Life Hollywood
Donor to Donor
Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network
Honor The Gift Coalition
IGA Nephropathy Foundation of America
Improving Renal Outcomes Collaborative
John Brockington Foundation
Kidney Donor Athletes
LifeGift, Texas
Living Kidney Donors Network
Living Legacy Foundation of Maryland
NATCO: The Organization for Donation and
Transplant Professionals
National Kidney Foundation
National Kidney Foundation of Illinois
NephCure Kidney International
New Jersey Sharing Network
OneLegacy
Organ Donation Advocacy Group
Organ Donation and Transplantation Alliance
Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation
Renal Physicians Association
Renal Support Network
Southwest Transplant Alliance
Texas Kidney Foundation
The Proactive Path
Transplant Life Foundation
Transplant Recipients International Organization

Transplant Support Organization
TransplantFirst Academy
United Network for Organ Sharing
Veterans Transplantation Association
Wait List Zero
Washington Regional Transplant Society
Youths Needing Organ and Tissue Transplants
Foundation

Cc: Senator William Cassidy
Senator Richard Durbin
Rep. Ron Kind
Rep. Michael Burgess