



July 15, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chair
Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Chair
Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Michael Burgess
Ranking Member
Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives

RE: AST, ASTS & AAKP Strong Support for the Energy and Commerce Committee's Markup of H.R. 5534, the Comprehensive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act

Dear Chairs Pallone and Eshoo and Ranking Members Walden and Burgess:

On behalf of the American Society of Transplantation (AST), American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS), and the American Association of Kidney Patients (AAKP), and our combined memberships representing the majority of our nation's medical transplant professionals and the largest number of kidney transplant patients and kidney donor families, we vigorously applaud and support the Energy and Commerce Committee's markup of H.R. 5534, the Comprehensive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act. This critical legislation, as introduced in the 116th Congress by Representatives Michael Burgess and Ron Kind, has never been more important to advance than in this current COVID-19 pandemic era. As you know, organ transplant patients remain an immunocompromised and very vulnerable patient population and were recently added to the most at-risk classification list by the Centers for Disease Control. The Committee's markup and advancement of H.R. 5534 is a critical next step toward ensuring that transplant patients can secure the lifesaving immunosuppressive medications that they must take to maintain a life-saving transplant. AST, ASTS, AAKP and the patient community that we serve are grateful for your longtime leadership and steadfast bipartisan support to pass this legislation and remove the current arbitrary restrictions that limit some Medicare transplant recipients to 36 months of the immunosuppressive medications that are necessary to maintain and preserve their donor organ--and their life.

AST, ASTS, and AAKP greatly appreciate the almost two-decade-long journey and partnership with Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle to draw attention to and address the availability of immunosuppressive medications for kidney transplant recipients. Over the years

there have been many Members in the House and Senate who have worked to amend and fix a flawed public policy placing both patients and tax payers at risk. Recent indications from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate that passage of H.R. 5534 could result in savings of \$70 million over a ten-year period. Removal of the arbitrary limitation for immunosuppressive drug coverage makes financial sense, for sure, but the unnecessary human toll as a result of the current 36-month coverage limitation remains tragic and unconscionable to organ donors, donor recipients, and those awaiting transplantation.

To be clear, correcting the current irrational immunosuppressive coverage policy will save lives--many of them. It will save transplanted kidneys so that others on the organ donor wait list can receive one of the scarce organs available. And it will save the Medicare Program the unnecessary cost of re-dialyzing and re-transplanting patients with kidney failure who have lost their graft as a result of their inability to afford their immunosuppressive medications. Implementation of the Comprehensive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act is expected to improve outcomes, reduce the need for re-transplantation, and motivate more potential living donors to "donate the gift of life."

Again, our organizations are grateful for the support and leadership of the House Energy and Commerce Committee as you mark up this critical transplant patient legislation. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you and your staff to advance and pass H.R. 5534, the Comprehensive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act.

Sincerely,



Richard Formica, MD
President
American Society of Transplantation



Marwan Abouljoud, MD
President
American Society of Transplant Surgeons



Richard Knight
President
American Association of Kidney Patients