

Pass H.R. 2969 & S. 1454 This Year

Make the 112th Session of Congress the last Congress that Kidney Transplant Recipients Lose Medicare Coverage and Their Kidney after 36 Months

Legislation Saves Lives, Resources and Federal Health Care Costs

June 26, 2012

U.S. House of Representatives

U.S. Senate

RE: Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act of 2011 Surpasses 100 Co-Sponsors In the House and Senate

Dear Member of Congress:

As the stakeholder organizations representing patients and the majority of professionals engaged in the field of organ donation and transplantation, we urge you to pass the Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act of 2011. This important bipartisan and bicameral legislation will ensure kidney transplant recipients are able to maintain Medicare Part B coverage of immunosuppressive drugs necessary to avoid organ rejection and a return to more costly treatments....a win-win for patients and the U.S. Treasury. The legislation, H.R. 2969 & S. 1454, introduced by Senators Durbin (D-IL), Cochran (R-MS) and Congressmen Burgess (R-TX) and Kind (D-WI), recently surpassed 100 co-sponsors. For more than a decade and 10 sessions of Congress this important patient legislation has received significant support from Republicans, Democrats and the Executive Branch. The legislation saves lives, life saving donor kidneys, and reduces the cost burden to the federal government....yet the bill continues to remain unaddressed at the conclusion of each Congress. On behalf of kidney patients, families, physicians, surgeons and all involved in the transplant process, we implore you to make the 112th Session of Congress the last Congress that patients will have to lose Medicare coverage and their kidney after 36 months.

Since 1972, Medicare has covered people with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) -- permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant -- without regard to age or SSDI status. There is no time limit for Medicare for a dialysis patient. By contrast, kidney transplant recipients lose Medicare coverage 36 months after transplant. Kidney transplants result in an improved quality of life, but more than 100,000 Americans are on kidney wait lists. Every effort must be made to ensure that transplanted kidneys are successful and that recipients have access to the drugs that prevent their immune system from rejecting the new organ.

It is not sound public policy or cost effective for Medicare to cover a kidney transplant and then stop immunosuppressive coverage after 36 months -- which can, and all too often does, lead to someone rejecting the transplanted kidney because they cannot afford their medicine. If patients lose their transplant, they resume Medicare eligibility for all medical needs, including dialysis or

another transplant. Medicare patients with ESRD will also incur a longer wait for a life-sustaining kidney transplant, if people who already received transplants lack coverage for the medications that prevent rejection and end up back on the waiting list. It is unfair to living donors, donor families, and the federal government not to do everything possible to maintain the transplanted kidney and gift-of-life that they have provided.

On behalf of the entire transplant community, we strongly urge you to support and pass the Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act of 2011. For more information, please contact: James Paluskiewicz, Office of Congressman Burgess; John Neureuther, Office of Senator Durbin; Travis Robey, Office of Congressman Kind; Elyse Marcellino, Office of Senator Cochran.

Sincerely,

American Association of Kidney Patients

Alliance for Paired Donation

American Kidney Fund

American Society of Transplantation

American Society of Transplant Surgeons

American Society of Nephrology

American Society of Pediatric Nephrology

American Transplant Foundation

Association of Organ Procurement Organizations

Dialysis Patient Citizens

International Transplant Nurses Society

National Kidney Foundation

NATCO, The Organization for Transplant Professionals

Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation

Renal Physicians Association

Renal Support Network

Texas Transplantation Society

Transplant Recipients International Organization

United Network for Organ Sharing