

FUNDING FOR FEDERAL ORGAN DONATION PROGRAMS

GOAL:

To increase funding for federal organ donation programs to expand the availability of organs for transplantation, thereby substantially reducing the length of the waiting list for donor organs.

BACKGROUND:

The Organ Donation and Recovery Improvement Act (ODA) was enacted in 2004 to address financial disincentives to living organ donation, to increase public and provider education to increase organ donation rates, to better coordinate organ donation in hospitals and to improve the practice of organ recovery. But, Congress did not provide federal funding for these programs until FY 2009, although the agency that administers transplantation programs, the Division of Transplantation (DoT) within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), did reallocate existing agency funds to begin funding one program in fiscal years 2007 and 2008.

Even with steady increases in organ donation rates, primarily from living donors, the need for organs for transplantation continues to far outweigh availability. There are over 109,000 Americans on the national transplant waiting list as of March 2009 while over 6,000 people die each year awaiting a donor organ. Despite this continuing need and the Office of Management and Budget's stated goal of doubling the number of transplanted organs by 2013, in recent years the DoT budget has been cut or level funded since enactment of the ODA. While Congress did provide a modest, but welcome, \$1.4 million increase to the DoT's budget in FY 2009, the need for increased funding is more critical than ever.

HRSA's commitment to these new ODA programs despite the lack of budgetary support from Congress resulted in funding of a new program to reimburse travel and subsistence expenses for living donors whose low incomes would otherwise prohibit them from being able to donate. Since its implementation in October 2007, this program has contributed to 189 living donations. These transplantations not only reduce the lengthy rolls of the organ donation waiting list but also generate savings to the Medicare program as these kidney recipients no longer spend tens of thousands annually on kidney dialysis. However, it is simply not possible for the DoT to achieve more than this modest change without further Congressional support and dedicated funding.

Congress must devote additional resources to Organ Donation and Recovery Improvement Act programs to increase organ donation activities. Only sufficient funding will allow the federal government, states and other public and private entities to expand current organ donation efforts and create new, effective programs to increase the supply of donor organs for transplantation.

REQUEST:

To augment existing programs and to pursue new organ donation initiatives through the ODA, **the undersigned organizations request Congress to provide a \$5 million increase in appropriations for the organ donation programs of the Division of Transplantation within the Health Resources and Services Administration for FY 2010.**