

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
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MEMORANDUM

April 29, 2021

To: Members of the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

Fr: Subcommittee Staff

Re: Hearing on “The Urgent Need to Reform the Organ Transplantation System to Secure More Organs for Waiting, Ailing, and Dying Patients”

The Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy will hold a hearing **on the Zoom video platform on Tuesday, May 4, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. E.T.** The hearing will examine our country’s system for securing organs for transplant into patients suffering from organ failure. The Subcommittee has been investigating poor performance by the government-contracted regional monopolies that are entrusted with obtaining organs for transplant from deceased donors, which are called organ procurement organizations (OPOs). For years, OPOs have evaded oversight and accountability, and OPO failures are costing thousands of lives a year.

The hearing will highlight the urgent need to take action to reform OPOs and obtain more organs for transplant, while featuring the perspectives of patients and underscoring racial, geographic, and socioeconomic inequities in the organ transplantation system.

At this moment, there are over 107,000 patients in the United States waiting for an organ for transplant.¹ Every day, an estimated 33 people in the United States die while waiting for their transplant.² COVID-19 will further strain this system: studies show that patients with “long Covid” continue to experience symptoms, including kidney disease, affecting “virtually any organ system or part of the body.”³

¹ Department of Health and Human Services, *Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network—Data* (online at <https://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/data/>) (accessed Apr. 23, 2021). This includes over 90,000 people waiting for a kidney transplant, over 11,000 waiting for a liver transplant, and over 3,500 waiting for a heart transplant.

² *Many Die Waiting for Organs. The Trump Administration Could Help.* Washington Post (Aug. 1, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/many-die-waiting-for-organs-the-trump-administration-couldhelp/2020/07/31/77e3a102-dfd6-11e9-b199-f638bf2c340f_story).

³ *Patients with Long Covid Face Lingering Worrisome Health Risks, Study Finds,* New York Times (Apr. 22, 2021) (online at www.nytimes.com/2021/04/22/health/covid-patients-health-risks-long-term.html?smid=em-share).

More than 80% of transplants involve organs from deceased donors. OPOs are responsible for securing those deceased-donor organs. These account for over 72% of all kidney transplants, almost 95% of all liver transplants, and 100% of all other organ transplants.⁴

I. WITNESSES

Panel One

Tonya Ingram

Patient Waiting for a Transplant

Dr. Dara Kass

Living Donor and Mother of Transplant Recipient

LaQuayia Goldring

Patient Waiting for a Transplant

Panel Two

Steve Miller

Chief Executive Officer

Association for Organ Procurement Organizations

Joe Ferreira

President

Association for Organ Procurement Organizations

Matt Wadsworth

President and Chief Executive Officer

Life Connection of Ohio

Dr. Seth Karp

Director

Vanderbilt Transplant Center

Donna Cryer

President and Chief Executive Officer

Global Liver Institute

Staff contacts: Rich Trumka and Ryan Galisewski at (202) 225-5051.

⁴ Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, *National Data* (online at <https://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/data/view-data-reports/national-data>) (accessed Apr. 23, 2021). The majority of living donations are for kidneys, with a small number of living liver donations.