

**Opening Statement**  
**Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Hearing: “A**  
**Year Removed: Oversight of Securing the U.S. Organ**  
**Procurement and Transplantation Network Act**  
**Implementation”**  
**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Introduction**

Thank you, Chair Griffith, for holding this important hearing. We are here because lives are on the line.

Everyday, 17 people die waiting for an organ transplant. Many more suffer through years of fear and uncertainty, not knowing if they will get the life-saving care they need in time.

And surviving family members of those willing to donate their organs and tissue deserve to know that their loved ones' act of selflessness is put to good use.

Nearly one year ago, the *Securing the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Act*, passed Congress unanimously and was signed into law by President Biden.

I'm grateful to my colleagues, Dr. Bucshon and Rep. Kelly, for their bipartisan work in getting this Act signed into law.

## **The Problem**

That bill sent a clear message that the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network, or OPTN, was in desperate need of reform.

As many of my colleagues...and certainly our witnesses...know, patients are waiting far too long for life-saving organ transplants.

Tragically, some lose their lives waiting...victims of a system that still struggling through a transition away from an old, broken model.

That is why it is so important that this committee remains informed about the effort to modernize the OPTN.

I'm grateful to hear from our witnesses today about their experience with the law's implementation and to understand the remaining problems that need to be addressed.

While the leaders of the key organizations involved in this process...Health Resources and Services Administration Administrator Carole Johnson...and OPTN Board President Dr. Richard Formica [FOUR-MIKE-AH]...were unable to testify today, the committee looks forward to receiving transparent and comprehensive updates from both moving forward.

## **Why are we here?**

OPTN plays a critical role in savings lives. However, systemic inefficiencies, outdated practices, and a lack of accountability have hindered its ability to fulfill that mission.

This committee has a duty to ensure that the changes we put in place are happening...

...we need to know that conflicts of interest are being eliminated throughout the OPTN...

...and we need to know that the OPTN is managed in a way that puts patient safety and well-being first.

We cannot allow the status quo to continue any longer.

Changing the name of the governing bodies of the OPTN but keeping the same individuals in place who failed to provide true oversight in the past is unacceptable.

Their inefficiencies and lack of accountability have cost people their lives.

The American people deserve better, and we're here today seeking that on their behalf.

## **Remaining Work**

I'm proud of the bipartisan work of this committee in passing the *Securing the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Act*, but that does not mean our work is over.

While the law is an important first step, challenges remain. Some of our witnesses today are not only advocates but also those performing organ transplantation surgeries. They are on the front lines, and it's critical their voices are heard.

We must ensure the promises of our bipartisan reforms do not go unfulfilled but lead to real improvements and better outcomes. This hearing is an opportunity to learn about what is happening, to ask tough questions...to demand accountability...and to ensure that we save as many lives as possible.

## **Conclusion**

Past congressional hearings focused on the United Network for Organ Sharing as the sole contractor and manager of the OPTN. But that is not today's hearing.

Today is about people. It's about patients waiting for an organ transplant...families who have lost loved ones, and the lives we can save if both Congress and HRSA get this implementation right.

I am committed to continuing to work in a bipartisan manner to modernize the OPTN, ensure transparency, hold people accountable, and ensure that every life-saving organ is used to its fullest potential.

Thank you to our witnesses again for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony. I yield back.