

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members

My name is Joe Vohs and I donated a kidney to a stranger in December 2011.

As a living organ donor, the decision to donate was driven by the desire to save a life. Eighteen people will die today waiting for a transplant.

The process of being a living organ donor is filled with hurdles. The medical ones are expected. It was the other expenses that gave me pause.

The recipient's insurance, most commonly Medicare, covers those medical costs, but not ancillary costs incurred by the donor: lost wages, time off work, spouse's time off work, etc. These factors made me hesitate for a moment, but not for long. For me, it was worth it.

I am fortunate in that I am self employed and have flexibility in my schedule. Last summer I had the honor of meeting 5 other altruistic donors. It was interesting to note their occupations: 2 teachers, 2 students and one was self employed, like myself. The ability to absorb the lost wages and time off work was most certainly a factor in all of our decisions to save a life. Most people aren't afforded that flexibility in their jobs.

The raw costs of my travel alone was \$2,100 for just the actual nephrectomy. This did not include the work up, follow up visits, and the lost wages my wife incurred to aid in my recovery. Recovery times can be from one week to a month, or even longer.

Helping to eliminate these obstacles will help add more eligible donors into the donor pool. More donors means more lives saved. While saving lives should be enough reason to ease the burden on donors, there are economic reasons as well.

Dialysis patients are a large consumer of state and federal funds, both Medicare and Medicaid. The direct cost alone of a dialysis patient to Medicare is approximately \$75,000 a year, which in 2009 was 6.7% of total Medicare spending. This does not include any indirect costs the system incurs. And these costs are rising.

Most dialysis patients are unable to work. By getting them off dialysis, they

might be able to return to the workplace and become a contributor to the tax rolls.

This is a win-win with no down side. I urge you to support HB 2386. The donors are willing to go under the knife and give an organ to save lives. The least the State of Kansas should do is support these donors.

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