



February 14, 2017

Representative Steve Alford, Chair, Children and Families Committee

Re: Nondiscrimination in Organ Transplantation Bill (HB 2343)

Dear Representative Alford and Children's and Families Committee,

The National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) is the largest nonprofit representing and advocating for people with Down syndrome and their families, with over 375 NDSS affiliate groups spanning all 50 states including Kansas. ***NDSS strongly supports the passage of HB 2343, the Nondiscrimination in Organ Transplantation bill.***

As the leading human rights organization for all individuals with Down syndrome, NDSS has worked tirelessly on the federal and state levels to break down barriers and create opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome to be included in all aspects of society and fulfill their hopes and dreams. In today's era of advanced medicine and inclusive educational settings, people with Down syndrome are living longer and healthier lives, attending postsecondary education programs, obtaining employment, getting married, living independently and are productive members of their local communities.

Yet, when people with Down syndrome and other disabilities do become seriously ill, HB 2343 acknowledges that "in other states nationwide, individuals with mental and physical disabilities have historically been denied life-saving organ transplants based on assumptions that their lives are less worthy, that they are incapable of complying with post-transplantation medical requirements or that they lack adequate support systems to ensure compliance with posttransplantation medical requirements." This bill seeks to affirm the Kansas legislature's commitment to eliminate discrimination by ensuring that individuals with disabilities are not denied access to organ transplants based solely on their disability.

Nondiscrimination in organ transplantation bills have been enacted in California, New Jersey, Maryland and Massachusetts, and a similar bill is currently before the Delaware legislature (HB 21). We hope that Kansas will join with these other states in its commitment to eliminating discrimination on the basis of disability. This bill is a positive step in that direction and has the potential to save lives. Thank you for your leadership on this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Hart Weir".

Sara Hart Weir, MS

President

National Down Syndrome Society

8 East 41st Street, 8th Floor

New York, NY 10017

sweir@ndss.org