



May 17, 2018

The Honorable Phil Roe
Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tim Walz
Ranking Member
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
333 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Thank You for the Inclusion of the Veterans Transplant Coverage Act of 2017 and Elements of the Veterans Increased Choice for Transplanted Organs and Recovery Act in VA MISSION Legislation

Dear Chairman Roe and Ranking Member Walz,

The undersigned transplant patient, physician, and provider organizations write to thank you for the inclusion of H.R. 1133, "The Veterans Transplant Coverage Act (VTCA) of 2017," in H.R. 5674, the Department of Veterans Affairs Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks ("MISSION") Act, which was favorably reported from your Committee on May 8, 2018 and to offer our assistance in efforts to effectuate the goals behind H.R. 2601, "The Veterans Increased Choice for Transplanted Organs and Recovery (VICTOR) Act."

Our organizations strongly support VTCA, and were pleased to see its inclusion in the MISSION Act. Thank you for working to ensure that veterans have real choice when they are in need of a transplant. Given the limited specificity in VICTOR on how the process would work for veterans seeking transplants at facilities of their choice, we ask that you work with us, key stakeholders in transplant, to help advise you and the VA. **We believe that we can be of great assistance in helping the VA develop an open and transparent process that ensures that veterans are indeed given the best possible choices and opportunities for the lifesaving gift of transplant.**

VETERANS TRANSPLANT COVERAGE ACT (VTCA)

VTCA is important step to helping veterans and those who give the gift of life to sustain veterans' lives nationwide. As you know, VTCA would expand access to lifesaving transplant procedures for veterans by authorizing the VA to cover the costs of an operation on a living donor providing a transplant for an eligible veteran where the living donor is not eligible for VA health care. H.R. 1133 authorizes the Veterans Administration to cover live donor transplant operations at a VA or non-VA facility. VCTA will help bring the VA in line with other federal government health care programs which cover living donors' health care needs related to transplant.

THE VETERANS INCREASED CHOICE FOR TRANSPLANTED ORGANS AND RECOVERY (VICTOR) ACT

The VICTOR Act gives veterans in need of an organ or bone marrow transplant through the VA the ability to seek care at a non-VA transplant facility. Currently, a veteran has to travel to one of only 13

Veteran's Affairs Transplant Centers (VATC) in the U.S. to receive their transplant, meaning a veteran will travel hundreds of miles for several visits to a VATC – with no guarantee that they will receive a transplant. Notably, no single VATC offers all types of transplant care, so there is no guarantee that the closest facility will be able to perform a transplant for a veteran in need.

The language in the VA MISSION Act begins to address this problem regarding veteran access to care, by allowing the VA Secretary to authorize an organ or bone marrow transplant for a veteran with a medically compelling reason to receive a transplant outside of the VA. We have some concerns; however, that the Secretarial determination process is not clearly defined. As such, we offer ourselves as resources to the Secretary and your Committee in crafting how this policy will be implemented at the Department. We look forward to working with you and the Secretary to ensure Veterans can access transplant through this important provision in the VA MISSION Act.

For our nation's veterans and for those who give the gift of life to sustain our veteran's lives, thank you for including VTCA and VICTOR in the VA MISSION Act. Thank you for your leadership in advancing bipartisan legislation to improve care for all our veterans.

If you have any questions, or if we can be of any assistance, please contact any of our legislative representatives Richard Knight at rk.reslend@gmail.com (AAKP), Peggy Tighe at peggy.tighe@PowersLaw.com (ASTS), Bill Applegate at Bill.Applegate@bryancave.com (AST), Rachel Meyer (ASN) at rmeyer@asn-online.org, or Troy Zimmerman at troyz@kidney.org (NKF).

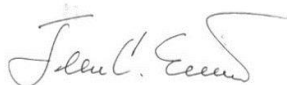
Sincerely,



Paul Conway
President
American Association of Kidney Patients



Mark Okusa, MD, FASN
President
American Society of Nephrology



Jean C. Emond, MD
President
American Society of Transplant Surgeons



Ronald G. Gill, PhD
President
American Society of Transplantation

Kevin Longino

Kevin Longino
CEO, Kidney Transplant Patient
National Kidney Foundation

CC: Senator Johnny Isakson, Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Senator Jon Tester, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Representative John Carter