H.R.5534 / S.3353 Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act of 2019

**Issue:** Individuals living with a kidney transplant must take immunosuppressive drugs to prevent their body from rejecting their kidney. Medicare covers immunosuppressive drugs for 36 months after the date of transplant surgery. After those three years, for patients under the age of 65, Medicare ends coverage for the individual and their needed medications. End-stage renal disease (ESRD) patients who cannot find alternative health insurance and cannot afford their immunosuppressive drugs out-of-pocket ultimately lose their kidney and must go back on dialysis, which makes them again eligible for Medicare.

For Americans living with ESRD, transplants are usually the best and most desired treatment. In the U.S. today about 94,000 patients are waiting for a kidney transplant, and the wait time can be years. Only 1 in 5 people on the wait list will receive an organ. A transplanted kidney is immeasurably valuable to the recipient, their family, and society. Patients who have a kidney transplant want to keep their transplant viable for as long as possible, and access to immunosuppressive drugs is an essential component of keeping a transplant.

Ensuring that kidney transplant recipients can keep their kidneys is also good for the taxpayer. Medicare pays $90,000 a year per Medicare patient on dialysis, but just $34,000 a year for transplant patients. Ensuring that patients have access to immunosuppressive drugs is great for the patient and good for our nation.

Recent projections from two different offices within the Department of Health and Human Services show significant Medicare savings if immunosuppressive drug coverage were extended to all Medicare ESRD beneficiaries indefinitely. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) projects Medicare would save $73.4 million over 10 years, while the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Office of the Actuary (OACT) projects savings of $300 million over 10 years.

**Request:** Please cosponsor H.R.5534 / S.3353, Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act of 2019

The bill would lift the Medicare 36-month time limit for kidney transplant recipients who have no other coverage for their immunosuppressive drugs. The bill would limit the extended coverage to individuals without access to other insurance such as employer group health, Medicaid, Veterans Affairs, Tri-Care, or Qualified Health Plans bought through state exchanges.