

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Chairman
US Senate Committee on Judiciary
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
US Senate Committee on Finance
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chairman
US Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
US Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Wyden, Chairman Cassidy, and Ranking Member Sanders:

I write today from the American Kidney Fund (AKF) to request your assistance with rehiring the dismissed employees at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Health Systems Bureau, Office of Organ Donation and Transplantation. These employees were assigned to work on the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) modernization initiative. In 2023, through your leadership, Congress passed the Securing the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Act. The law addressed potential cases of fraud, waste, and abuse in the national organ transplantation system and aimed to modernize the program with state-of-the-art technology.

That same year, HRSA launched its OPTN Modernization Initiative focusing on five key areas: technology, data transparency, governance, operations, and quality improvement and innovation. The terminated HRSA employees are required to implement a congressionally mandated modernization of the nation's outdated transplant system. The law aligns with the Advancing American Kidney Health (AAKH), Executive Order, issued by President Trump's first Administration.

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) fights kidney disease on all fronts as the nation's leading kidney nonprofit. AKF works on behalf of the 1 in 7 American adults living with kidney disease, and the millions more at risk, with an unmatched scope of programs that support people wherever they are in their fight against kidney disease—from prevention through transplant. Through programs of prevention, early detection, financial support, disease management, clinical research, innovation and advocacy, no kidney organization impacts more lives than AKF. AKF is one of the nation's top-rated nonprofits, investing 97 cents of every donated dollar in programs, and holds the highest 4-Star rating from Charity Navigator and the Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar.

The goals of the AAKH Executive order are to reduce the risk of kidney failure, improve access to quality of treatment options, increase access to kidney transplants, reduce the number of people who develop end-stage kidney disease (ESRD), and to improve the lives of kidney patients. The kidney community continues to be excited about President Trump's goal of addressing chronic kidney disease (CKD) and ESRD in the United States. We are hopeful he will continue this work in his new Administration.

A key pillar of the AAKH was increasing the number of kidney transplants, including through modernization of the U.S. transplant procurement system. OPTN staff have identified areas for

modernization, including improving data, updating computer programs and telecommunications, and automating processes to improve the percentage of available organs and ensure that people in all geographic regions have access to transplantation. Transplantation modernization continued with the passage of the Securing the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Act (P.L. 118-14), which passed with broad bipartisan support and was signed into law in September 2023.

The modernization of the OPTN will increase government efficiency, reduce costs, and identify potential fraud, waste, and abuse through improved data transparency and performance metrics. To do this, HRSA requires staff with technical expertise, such as data scientists and engineers to develop state-of-the-art systems and processes. The rehiring of the OPTN modernization staff will save taxpayer dollars, improve the lives of Americans living with kidney disease, and allow more patients to receive life-saving transplants.

We ask that you please work with HHS to rehire the employees of the HRSA Division of Transplantation to ensure that critical OPTN modernization efforts continue, in alignment with the goals of President Trump's AAKH Executive Order.

If you have any questions, please contact Holly Bode, Vice President of Government Affairs, at hbode@kidneyfund.org or (202) 361-8275.

Sincerely,



LaVarne A. Burton
President and CEO

cc:

The Honorable Todd Young
The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
The Honorable Robin Kelly
The Honorable Carol Miller
The Honorable Suzan DelBene
The Honorable Beth Van Duyne
The Honorable Jim Costa