



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Colorado Helps Pave the Way for More Living Organ Donors**

COLORADO – (May 15, 2018) – Tomorrow, at 4:30 p.m., Governor John Hickenlooper will sign the Colorado Living Donor Support Act - HB1202. This legislation will remove a significant barrier for living kidney and liver donors who may not step forward if they are afraid to lose their job or income during their recovery period after surgery. It makes Colorado one of the first states in the country to subsidize paid leave for living organ donors by providing a tax credit for employers.

There are 2,300 people on the waitlist for an organ transplant in Colorado. 96% of those individuals are in need of a liver or kidney, both of which can be donated by a living person.

**Studies have found that the average American experienced nearly \$2,000 in lost wages when they donate a kidney, and more Coloradans die each year of kidney and liver failure than all the homicides in the state combined.**

Also, recent studies have shown that many transplant patients won't talk about living donation because they are concerned that their family members and friends will lose income and experience financial hardship as a result of living organ donation.

The American Transplant Foundation introduced HB-1202 in February 2018 and has lead grassroots advocacy efforts to ensure its successful passage. Until now, the only legislation in place to support living donors in Colorado applied only to state employees and provided them with just two days of paid leave specific to organ donation.

**Bill Background:** The Living Donor Support Act would provide up to 10 days of paid time off to living organ donors in the State of Colorado. Employees who receive less than \$80,000 annually are eligible.

The Act would provide a tax credit of 35% to employers granting paid time off to employees becoming living organ donors. In addition, employers will receive a tax credit for the cost of temporary replacement help. The bill will take effect on January 1st, 2020.

**Senator Bob Gardner said,** "Living organ donation is not only the most effective way to eliminate the organ transplant waitlist in Colorado, but is also the most economically beneficial way to address many chronic health issues, particularly kidney disease. On average, for each

transplant patient taken off of dialysis, Medicare saves over \$500,000 over the course of ten years.”

**State Representative Alec Garnett said,** “Living organ donors should not face significant financial hardship or risk losing their jobs because they are willing to give the Gift of Life. This bill will benefit the many in need of a lifesaving transplant, and it will allow those donating an organ to take time off to recover without financial stress.”

**Altruistic kidney donor Sara Martin said,** “I think there are a lot of people that would become a living donor, but without the security of knowing their employer is supportive, they feel they can't. With this certainty, it could shift some potential living donors from ‘no, I can't’ to ‘yes, I can.’”

**Anastasia Henry, American Transplant Foundation’s Executive Director, said** “Living organ donation is not only the most effective way to eliminate the organ transplant waitlist in Colorado, but it also the most economically beneficial way to address kidney disease. Our hope is that this legislation will bring us a step closer to making Colorado the first state where nobody dies while waiting for a transplant.”