



# Texas CHAPTER

March 30, 2017

The Honorable J. D. Sheffield  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

Re: HB3874

Dear Representative Sheffield,

On behalf of the Texas Chapter of the American College of Cardiology, thank you so much for all the work you, your staff, and Dr. Snyder have done regarding the bill for an opt-out donor registry.

The main obstacle with providing life-saving organ transplants is well stated on the DonateLife Texas web site: "The number of people needing transplants is growing, the number of potential donors is not.!" WE AGREE!

The waitlist in Texas which represents roughly 10% of the national list has swollen to 12,000 people, 72% of which are minorities. On the contrary, the percentage of potential donors on the Texas organ donor registry is actually falling. DonateLife America's Registry Scorecard taken from their 2018 Annual Report shows that:

- **Donor Designation Rate in Texas is 31%, last in the nation, down from 34% in 2017**
- **Eligible Designated Donor Rate is only 16%, last in the nation, down from 23% in 2017**

Compared to most other European countries which use an Opt-out system and enjoy participation rates of greater than 90%, the opt-in donor registry in Texas is severely underperforming, and **clearly not working!**

The impact is disheartening both nationally:

- **Every 10 minutes, someone new is added to the national transplant waiting list**
- **Every year about 8,000 people die waiting for an organ.**
- **On average 20 people die each day waiting for a life-saving organ transplant.**
- **The median wait time for a heart transplant is 535 days, for blood group O.**

and in Texas:

- **On average 1.5-2 people die each day on the wait list in Texas( 600-800 a year)**
- **Another 2-3 people a day on average are removed from the waitlist in Texas because they become Too Sick, most of whom subsequently die (730 – 1095 a year).**

And this is occurring as the number of deceased donor transplants in Texas *actually fell last year by 176*. The reality is we simply do not have enough organs to offer that gift of life.

Now one of the arguments for maintaining the status-quo with the opt-in system is that Texas has one of the highest transplantation rates in the world per million people. But many factors contribute to actual transplantation rates, such as number of transplant specialists, transplant surgeons, number of ICU beds, insurance coverage, etc and Texas is blessed with some of the highest rates in the world of these. Availability of designated organs is not however.

But we still hear the argument the opt-in system in Texas is working, don't mess with it. I dare say that for the 1300-1400 Texans yearly who are removed from the waitlist because they die or become too sick and then die the system for them and their families is not working!

Studies have shown that when a country transitions from an opt-in to opt-out model, their donor registry designations increase by up to 25-30%. That is why almost every European country has voted for an opt-out system, most recently Wales in 2015 and England just last month, because it works!

This is why your Bill is so important. DonateLife America cites on their website that 95% of Americans are in favor of being a donor, but only 58% are actually registered. It is time to close that gap! We have seen the dramatic effects of the Opt in laws in Europe Those of us committed to saving and improving lives want to partner with you on this noble effort!

We realize that there may be some opposition, even opposition from some who should be your strongest allies on this legislation. Frankly, I question their motivation and their inability to see the evidence regarding what this type of legislation has done elsewhere. When things don't add up, one must suspect conflicts - especially financial ones. The OPO's opposition to this bill may be related to the fact that they receive large sums of money for public education campaigns regarding organ donation . . . campaigns that would not be necessary should this bill be enacted as law.

We are grateful to you for filing this legislation because it provides a common sense solution to this problem that could save the lives of hundreds of Texans every year. You have the full backing of the Texas Chapter of the American College of Cardiology.

Respectfully,

Ken Shaffer, MD, FACC  
Texas Governor, American College of Cardiology Board of Governors  
President, Texas Chapter of the American College of Cardiology