



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Diane J. Savino

IDC, Assemb. Ortiz, Join 10-year-old Heart Transplant Survivor to Push for Life-Saving Legislation 'Lauren's Law' to Increase Organ Donation Passed Important Committee Vote Today

DIANE J. SAVINO April 5, 2011

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ALBANY, N.Y. – The Independent Democratic Conference and Assemblyman Felix Ortiz, (D-Brooklyn) joined 10-year-old heart transplant survivor Lauren Shields and her family today in a push for life saving legislation.

The measure, "Lauren's Law," would prohibit a driver's license application from being processed unless the organ donation section is filled out. Applicants would have to check a box stating "yes," or "not at this time." There currently is an organ donation section on the application, but it is not required to be filled out.

This change would increase organ donation in New York, which is ranked last in the country for the number of new donors.

"It is critical that we increase donor enrollment numbers here in New York State," said the Senate sponsor of Lauren's Law, Senator David Carlucci, (D-Rockland/Orange), "Everyday people are losing their lives due to lack of organ donations. Lauren's Law will save lives by significantly increasing the number of New Yorkers who chose to become life saving organ donors simply by increasing the number of people who have to make the choice."

The bill (S.3885/A.6148) cleared its first major hurdle today, passing the Senate Committee on Transportation today.

"On March 18, 2009, just when it seemed that all hope was lost, the doctors came in and told mommy that my donor was found," Lauren Shields said. "I had an angel that was willing to give me the gift of life. I am so thankful for the gift that I received but I know that there are so many other children and adults that are waiting just like I was. As happy as I am that I am able to get back to my regular routine, I can't help but think about the others that still wait. I am so grateful that Senator Carlucci and Assemblyman Ortiz are taking a step to help increase donor enrollments."

"Organ donation is an issue that is close to my heart. Like Lauren, my mother was in need of a transplant. She was one of the lucky ones because she received her kidney from my sister. Often times, however, that is not the case. On average, eighteen people die each year while

waiting for an organ. There is a tremendous need for organ and tissue donors throughout our country. I am hopeful that Lauren's Law will be enacted in our state and that more people will choose to pass on the precious gift of life", said Assemblyman Felix Ortiz, Chair of the New York State Assembly Mental Health Committee and Sponsor of the bill in the Assembly.

In New York, more than 9,300 people are on the list for organ transplants. However, the state has ranked last in the number of organ donors signed up through their DMV program. In 2009, New York ranked last in the nation, signing up only 11 percent (or 427,562) of the 3.8 million people who received a driver's license or a non-driver's identification. By contrast, Colorado signed up 64 percent of new license holders.

Nationally, there are approximately 110,000 men, women and children waiting for organ transplants. Every 11 minutes, a new name is added to the national waiting list. However, 18 people die every day because of the lack of donated organs.

"People's lives are literally on the line here," Senator Jeff Klein, (D-Bronx/ Westchester), said. "I commend Senator Carlucci and Assemblyman Ortiz for leading the charge on this effort to expand the network of available organ donors and to help more people like Lauren."

"April is National Donate Life Month and I can't think of a better way to observe it than to get this critically important legislation passed, and signed into law," said Senator Diane Savino, (D-Staten Island/ Brooklyn).

"Lauren's story is truly inspiring, and I am glad that she, Senator Carlucci and Assemblyman Ortiz are taking the lead on drawing attention to the benefits of organ donation," said Senator David J. Valesky, (D-Oneida).

Caption: 10-year-old heart transplant survivor Lauren Shields at podium. (From left) State Senators David J. Valesky, (D-Oneida), Jeff Klein, (D-Bronx/ Westchester), Diane Savino, (D-Staten Island/ Brooklyn), David Carlucci, (D-Rockland/ Orange), and Assemblyman Felix Ortiz (D-Brooklyn).