



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Paying it Forward: Kennedy Pushes Legislation Offering Tax Credit and Job Security for Organ Donors

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY April 14, 2015

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*As local Transplant Miracles Foundation seeks 10,000 new donors, Kennedy Pushes Bill to Assist Those Giving the Gift of Life*

*Kennedy: Organ donation is a stressful and trying time – New York can do more to ensure donors have the resources and protection they need.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) today announced a push for the passage of legislation that would give organ donors in New York State a tax credit of up to \$10,000. During the transplant process, expenses can add up fast- but not just for an organ recipient. Donors often face astronomical costs for travel, lodging, medical expenses and lost wages. Under this legislation co-sponsored by Kennedy, deductions would be allowed for these non-reimbursable expenses. Furthermore, the bill, **S2162**, amends current labor law, making it illegal for an employer to fire or discriminate against any employee who decides to donate an organ.

This push comes as organ donation advocacy groups celebrate April as Donate Life Month. Nationwide, there are more than 100,000 people waiting for viable donations. According to the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network, there were only 5,818 living donors in the United States last year, a number that has decreased every year since 2009, leaving a

substantial number of terminally ill patients still awaiting a transplant. Of those transplants performed, only 551 living donations took place in New York State.

While a Gallup poll shows more than 85% of Americans support organ donation, less than half of those who support it have signed up to be donors. Hesitation to commit may stem in part from the fear of exorbitant medical expenses associated with a transplant, as well as the time off needed from work during the recovery period. By alleviating those fears altogether, this legislation opens up a new door for potential donors, and encourages them to explore signing up.”

“Every 10 minutes, another name is added to the national organ transplant waiting list. Giving the gift of life is an incredibly selfless act, but it is especially so for living donors—those healthy individuals willing to give a kidney or parts of other organs,” said Senator Kennedy. “Their stories are incredibly powerful and their sacrifice immeasurable, and yet the toll taken on them isn’t just physical. While our goal is to ease the financial and employment burdens they face, we’re also hoping to open up a greater conversation about organ donation, and spark an informed dialogue that will help the thousands waiting for a transplant.”

Kennedy’s call comes as local advocacy group Transplant Miracles Foundation launches a campaign to sign up 10,000 new donors this month. The Foundation, which was started in 2008, focuses on raising transplant survival rates through research, encouraging donations through education and working to improve the overall quality of life of recipients.

“Transplant Miracles is asking Western New Yorkers to *be a miracle* by signing up as organ donors,” said Jack O’Donnell of Transplant Miracles Foundation. “Senator Kennedy’s legislation will help make those miracles happen by providing common sense protections to donors and making donation more affordable. In recognition of that work, TMF is

recognizing Sen. Kennedy as an honorary miracle worker.”

For a comprehensive look at the legislation Kennedy is pushing, [click here](#). To learn more about TMF's Be A Miracle Campaign and how you can become a donor, [click here](#).

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