



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose Peralta

## Senator Jose Peralta, LiveOnNY and special guest Mariana Villarreal highlight the importance of becoming an organ donor to encourage organ donation in New York

JOSE PERALTA August 17, 2015

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State Senator Jose Peralta today unveiled legislation that would require certain state forms and applications to include a space allowing New Yorkers to sign up for the Donate Life Registry. The bill (S.6022) would increase opportunities for New Yorkers to register as organ donors in the state that ranks last nationwide per capita.

Senator Peralta made the announcement as part of the National Minority Donor Awareness Week (August 1-7) and in collaboration with donors' family members, living organ donors and recipients, representatives from LiveOnNY, and special guest Mariana Villarreal, a Hooters Girl from Georgia who donated a kidney to a patron she knew for only for a few weeks.

According to LiveOnNY, the premier non-for-profit organ donor organization

in New York, more than 10,000 New Yorkers statewide are currently waiting for organ transplants. Every two-and-a-half hours, a person's name is added to the state's organ transplant waiting list. LiveOnNY has helped save more than 20,000 lives over the past 37 years.

National Minority Donor Awareness Week is especially important to recognize in New York, with its diverse population and where only approximately 25% of residents are registered as part of the Donate Life Registry. The national average of residents registered as organ donors exceeds 55%. Notably, the percentage of registered residents in Queens is even lower than the state average at 11.25%.

"The equation is simple: one gift of organ donation can equal up to eight lives saved and more than 50 lives can be improved through tissue donation. Giving life is the best gift one can give," said State Senator Jose Peralta (D-Queens). "This is the highest form of altruism, the highest form of solidarity with others. In terms of healthcare, here in New York, we are in a state of emergency. Far too many New Yorkers are dying waiting for organs."

Senator Peralta added, "This is an easy and common sense approach to increase the number of New Yorkers who become organ donors, simply by having the option to check the donate life registry box on multiple state forms".

The Senator noted that, according to LiveOnNY, in 2013, about 1,670 New Yorkers received life-saving organ transplants. However, that same year, about 600 men, women and children lost their lives because of the shortage of donors.

For instance, the legislation would require all applications for admission to state operated institutions of higher education (SUNY) and community colleges to include a space on forms for enrollment in the Donate Life Registry.

The bill also would require additional state-issued forms to offer New Yorkers the possibility to register as an organ donor, including:

- Applications for teaching certifications/licenses issued by the New York State Department of Education;
- Applications for admission to State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY);
- Applications for professional licenses issued by the New York State Department of Education;
- New York income tax forms;
- Applications for participation in the State's healthcare exchange;
- Biennial registration renewals forms, filed by attorneys;
- Applications for admission to practice law;
- Applications for the registration and renewal of motor vehicles: and
- Applications to conduct a profession or occupation as licensed by the New York Department of State.

At the present time, New Yorkers interested in becoming organ donors can only do so by signing up for the Donate Life Registry at the Department of Motor Vehicles, on voter registration forms and separate standalone forms.

Helen Irving, President and Chief Executive Officer of LiveOnNY, said,

LiveOnNY applauds State Senator Peralta for his vision and leadership to proactively address the critical shortage of suitable organs for lifesaving transplants. New Yorkers support organ donation and the bill to include organ donation enrollments in state forms can help inspire New Yorkers to take action and register on the New York State Donate Life Registry. These efforts provide simple measures that can save lives.”

“I never would’ve thought being a Hooters Girl would lead to an opportunity to help save someone’s life someday,” said Mariana Villarreal, Hooters Girl of Roswell Georgia. “After watching my grandmother battle kidney failure, I was deeply moved by Donald’s need and knew I had a perfectly good kidney to share, so I did, and it has been one of the most rewarding decisions of my life.”