



Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank

*"To Save, Enhance, and Heal Lives
Through Organ Donation and Transplantation"*

2611 S.W. 3rd Ave., Ste. 320
Portland, OR 97201-4943
office 503.494.5560
fax 503.494.4725
toll-free 1.855.807.7779
www.pntb.org

January 30, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Healthcare

From: The Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank

RE: Oppose SB 144

Dear Chair Monnes Anderson and Members of the Committee:

I am the Executive Director of the Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank (PNTB), the federally designated Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) serving the state of Oregon, southern Idaho, and southwestern Washington.

Our organization, PNTB, opposes SB 144 because we believe the proposed changes could have devastating impacts on our state's lifesaving Donor Registry by changing the language in the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act.

Oregon currently has one of the most robust registries in the nation, with more than 2.5 million Oregonians consented to organ, eye, and tissue donation. 63% of actual organ donors last year were registered. Substantial resources have been utilized over many decades to ensure the public's trust in our registry to save lives. SB 144, if adopted, could single-handedly destroy this success, requiring the current registry to be dismantled and re-built because participants have not consented to whole body donation.

This could result in a reduction of the number of people who have opted to donate organs to date.

Organ, eye, and tissue donation for transplant, and body donation for research, are two separate considerations for Oregonians, and require two different consent options. Combining the two is confusing to Oregonians, as they consider making the ultimate gift.

If Oregonians are confused about what they are consenting to, or don't want to donate to research, it could make them less likely to donate at all, reducing the number of organs and tissues available for transplant. Additionally, non-transplant whole body research companies can offer compensation, such as free cremation, that non-profit transplant programs, by law, cannot. This could lead to families choosing body donation over lifesaving organ and tissue donation through financial incentive rather than altruistic means.

Let me be clear: a reduction in the number of donors for transplant would result in deaths on the local and national waiting lists. Currently, there are 3,065 people waiting for an organ transplant in the Pacific Northwest, while more than 115,000 individuals are waiting nationally. On average, 22 people die each day while waiting for a life-saving organ transplant.

Body donation for research is distinct from organ donation, the lifesaving process that enables surgeons to transplant donated organs such as hearts, livers, and kidneys. It is also different from the recovery of tissue and eyes to restore wholeness, mobility, and sight. These practices are strictly regulated by the U.S. government. Selling organs, eyes, and tissue for transplant is also against federal and state law. The donation of a whole body for research purposes happens in a separate context in the aftermath of death, requiring discussion, planning, and separate consents.

Combining these practices within the Oregon Donor Registry by changing the definitions in the UAGA would cause potential regulatory conflicts, and would create direct conflict with its purpose to instill public trust: the trust that one's organs, eyes, and tissues are being gifted for transplant to save and enhance lives.

This legislative revision to the Oregon UAGA, and by default the Donor Registry, creates confusion, potential conflicts in regulation, and threatens the lifesaving mission of the registry. That is why we oppose SB 144.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MS', with a long horizontal line extending to the left and a vertical line extending downwards from the 'S'.

Michael S. Seely RN, MS, CPTC
Executive Director Pacific Northwest Transplant Bank