



DATE: January 29, 2019
TO: Oregon Senate Committee on Health Care
FROM: Eye Bank Association of America
RE: Opposition to SB 144

As the CEO of the Eye Bank Association of America, I am writing on behalf of the 75 not-for-profit eye banks across the United States, including Lions VisionGift in Portland, that provided over 50,000 sight-restoring corneas for transplant last year. We wish to express our strong opposition to SB 144.

This bill would grant for-profit body donation organizations access to the registry developed for organ, eye and tissue donation for transplant by redefining “procurement organization” to include body donation organizations. These are vastly different organizations, and whole body donation was not included in the consent granted by registrants to the donor registry.

Currently, Oregon’s donor registry lists over 2.5 million people who have offered to share their organs, eyes and tissues with those in need of transplant. If this legislation passes, those individuals would have to be removed from the registry and asked to re-register. It is expected that many currently-registered donors would opt out of the system if their bodies could be used for medical experimentation and other non-transplant purposes. As a result, countless Oregonians will have to wait longer for needed transplants. Given that 22 people die each day while waiting for an organ, this legislation will inevitably lead to more such deaths.

Thanks to the trust we have developed with the American people, the American eye banking system is the most effective and efficient in the world. The U.S. has a surplus of corneal tissue for transplant, allowing us to fulfill 100% of our domestic need on demand and still send over 25,000 corneas per year to other countries whose systems are not as robust. That trust, and potentially our tissue availability, would be severely undermined if prospective donors believed that their bodies could be used for purposes other than organ, eye or tissue transplantation.

EBAA and its members actively support using corneal tissue for education and research purposes; in fact, Lions VisionGift works closely with OHSU’s ophthalmic research efforts. But this typically entails the use of tissue that is determined unsuitable for transplant, and requires specific consent for non-transplant use. None of these protections are included in the legislation as currently written.

If SB 144 passes, it will reduce the supply of desperately needed donor organs, subjecting Oregonians to longer waits for transplants and inevitably resulting in avoidable deaths. That is why we’re opposed to SB 144.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin P. Corcoran", written in a cursive style.

Kevin P. Corcoran
President & CEO