
From: Nena Nauss [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 5, 2019 3:56 PM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: ATTENTION: Law Amendments Committee regarding organ and tissue donation

I am writing in support of the government bill that recommends changes in organ and tissue transplantation where donor consent will be assumed unless an individual opts out.

Transplantation is a subject I am passionate about.

My father had one of the first kidney transplants in Nova Scotia in the 1970's. This surgery improved his quality of life and granted him the opportunity to be with our family for a few more years.

At the age of 32 years when our only daughter was 5 years of age, I experienced end stage kidney disease.

I was fortunate to receive a kidney from a living related donor, my brother.

Later I experienced chronic liver disease.

In 2002 I received a liver from a donor who was an 8 year old child. This was a particularly stressful time in my life as I carried a pager for close to 2 years waiting for a suitable donor organ and was very ill at the time.

I am a retired social worker. These transplant surgeries allow me to live a successful and impactful life. I was able to be a productive member in society having worked in a child protection agency for 10 years and then at the IWK Health Centre in a specialized program for women experiencing mental health issues during pregnancy and postpartum until my retirement. Together with my husband, we were able to witness our daughter's high school and university graduations, marriage, the birth of a healthy grandchild, and continue to support her in her chosen career as a practising lawyer.

I could speak at length regarding the virtues of being given the gift of life and how my life has been impacted, but it is obvious that we all wish to embrace life to the fullest.

I certainly respect an individual's wish to opt out of being a donor due to religious, philosophical or personal reasons. There have been negative statements about government violating one's rights, but I strongly feel that these rights are being respected due to the fact that there is the opportunity to opt out of presumed consent.

I have met donor families, other transplant recipients and sadly patients who succumbed to their illnesses before receiving a donor organ. I truly feel if individual families had to face the prospect of requiring a transplant, they would view the proposed changes very differently. Donor families express being comforted by the fact their loved one has provided a gift of life or improved quality of life to others, while they were dealing with tragic losses in their lives.

There is a great need for education around the issue to address fears and dispel myths. I am often shocked by the misinformation I have heard, even from other health care professionals.

Life has an expiry date. There is an urgent need for conversations about death and our wishes when we die. It is paramount that these discussions happen prior to sudden or unexpected illness and/or pending death.

There are far too many people on wait lists for transplants in our province and country, and many will die unless we can improve donor rates.

My hope is that within the next few months the general public and medical professionals will receive the support and education they require to pass this bill and make it a reality.

The mere fact it is being considered provides us all with the opportunity to champion this very worthy cause.

I take great pride in the fact that our province has taken a leadership role in this vital piece of legislation to improve the lives of our families, friends and community. Your support is crucial.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Nena Nauss