

Testimony

The Michigan House of Representative Health Policy Committee

Rep. Julie M. Rogers (Democrat) District-41 Chair
Rep. Karen Whitsett (Democrat) District-4 Majority Vice Chair
Rep. Curtis VanderWall (Republican) District-102 Minority Vice Chair

Michigan Living Donor Protection Act SB 384

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Good morning. Thank you, Chair Rogers, Vice Chair Whitsett, and Vice Chair VanderWall, for the opportunity to speak in support of the Living Donor Protection Act, SB 384. I'm Erich Ditschman and I live in East Lansing. I was fortunate to have received a kidney donation from my wife, Andria Ditschman in 2001. She works in enforcement at LARA and unfortunately she couldn't join us today.

I grew up in Port Huron and Andria was from Goodells. We met in high school. Soon after I found out that I had kidney disease. My kidneys worked at fifty percent with both failing. I didn't have a diagnosis, and was recommended to see a nephrologist yearly. At the time I wasn't made aware of dialysis or the possible need for a kidney transplant, because the disease wasn't severe. If I was, as a teenager, it didn't sink in. See, I was falling love and there wasn't room in my brain for much of anything else.

Twenty years later, Andria and I are married we have a two year old son Jacob, and we're living in East Lansing. Within three months I suddenly

lost the use of my kidneys. We call this End Stage Kidney Disease. In order to survive I would need kidney replacement therapy-Dialysis or a Kidney Transplant. Without either, I would die in a few weeks.

I had an emergency start into dialysis. Andria immediately wanted to be tested to see if she would be a compatible match. Against the odds, she was. Four months later she gave me one of her kidneys. The surgery went well for both of us. She was discharged in a few days and went home to be with Jake. She came back the next day to see me, and then fell ill. They treated her down the hall for a reaction to the pain medicine then she checked into the connecting hotel just in case it didn't clear.

In total, Andria had five days off for the surgery and complications, and then another three weeks off for recovery. Fortunately for her, this living donation has not impacted her personnel life insurance policy. Her work at the State came after her private employer at the time of her surgery. Thankfully she has not had a need for her current disability, long-term care, or life insurance policies provided by the State.

It is now twenty-two years post donation. This is a testament to the safety of living organ donation, and the rigorous health screening that donors undergo. The Living Donor Protection Act will ensure that these policies will not be denied to her, if or when, the need arises.

In Michigan for kidney disease alone, not including other vital living organ and tissue donations, we have

- 2,059 citizens waiting for a kidney.

- Transplants in 2023 so far (deceased and living): 479 (105 living and 374 deceased)
- Approximately 16,022 patients are on dialysis
- Only about 1 in 4 Michiganders on the waiting list received a transplant in 2022

A recent study by John Hopkins University of their donors showed that a quarter of living do of living donors who tried to obtain or change their life insurance faced discrimination because they were organ donors.

We need to encourage living organ donation, not discourage it. One in seven Michiganders are at risk for kidney disease. Many of them may need a kidney transplant to continue to live their productive lives. People, like Andria, who gave me the gift of life, shouldn't have to worry about being penalized or discriminated against.

I request your support today for passing SB 384 and sending to for a full House vote. Let's make Michigan the 32nd state to pass the Living Donor Protection Bill and tell potential donors that you want to protect them and that saving the life of a Michigander shouldn't not cause them worry about their future.

Thank you for your time.