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Chairwoman Kaiser, Vice-Chairman Washington, and members of the Committee:

Thank you so very much for the opportunity to speak with you all today on HB 944. My name is Ellery Payton and I sit here as a two-time kidney transplant recipient. I am very lucky to be able to testify today and that is only because of people like Kellen Leech.

My first kidney transplant lasted almost 10 years. When it failed, I went back on dialysis for 18 months. But because I had those 10 great years, I knew I had to work hard to find someone to donate a kidney to me. Research shows that kidneys last longer when they come from a living donor instead of a deceased donor. You also have no control as to when that call might come that you have a deceased donor kidney available, so I took the situation into my own hands.

I called, texted and messaged everyone I could think of because getting a new kidney was that important. I am so lucky Kellen said yes but as you just heard from him, the transplant was delayed because he had to get his finances to cover the costs of his recovery before he could go through with the donation.

I had the great fortune that nothing happened during the two months I had to wait but something very well could have. People on dialysis are prone to infections and can also have detrimental side effects from doing dialysis three times a week for four hours each time.

I don't wish those long two months on anyone. And while this legislation would not have immediately put cash in Kellen's hands, it would have given him some peace of mind that he could have written off some of the expenses, such as the costs of medications and after-care that he was going to experience. Please support this legislation and please support people with kidney disease because a new kidney is a new lease on life and I hope everyone can experience the generosity and kindness of people like Kellen.