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February 25, 2020

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 712 - Family Bereavement Act

Dear Delegate Regina Boyce,

On behalf of The Living Legacy Foundation of Maryland (LLF) and the more than 3,600 Marylanders awaiting a life-saving organ transplant, thank you for your continued support of organ and tissue donation. The Living Legacy Foundation is privileged to work collaboratively with Maryland hospitals, transplant centers, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and funeral homes to facilitate the organ and tissue donation process. Every day, we have the honor of working with families, who at a time of tremendous loss, help others through the gift of donation. Without the incredible support of the Maryland legislature, we would be unable to achieve the immense success we have in saving and enhancing lives through donation.

The Living Legacy Foundation serves as the Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) for most of the state of Maryland. As one of 58 OPOs certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and a member of the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN), The Living Legacy Foundation coordinates the donation process for all Maryland counties with the exception of Montgomery, Prince George, and Charles Counties.

When a hospital recognizes an individual has suffered a non-recoverable injury or has died, their staff contacts our organization. The LLF team collaborates with our hospital partners to coordinate all aspects of the donation process. Of particular importance is the support we provide to the families of potential and actual donors. The gift of life would not be possible without the generosity of both donors and their families.

Our team's interaction with families occurs in the midst of their tremendous grief and loss. In recognition of that, and with the utmost respect, we also provide extensive bereavement support for donor families in the years following their loved one's donation. Our Family Services team is responsible for providing comprehensive support to grieving families in all aspects of donation. They are specially trained Master's Degree prepared professionals who have extensive expert knowledge and experience in supporting those suffering the effects of acute and anticipatory grief.

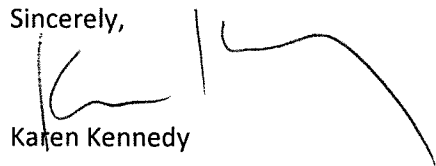


We offer our support in passing HB712 – Family Bereavement Act. This bill will help ensure that Marylanders who suffer loss due to death are afforded the opportunity to take bereavement leave. As healthcare providers working with those facing the immediate aftermath of loss every day, we see firsthand the difference that support services such as this provide to grieving families. Grief manifests itself in many ways, especially in the first days and weeks of one’s loss. Grief can cause myriad physical and psychological symptoms, including transient memory challenges, difficulty concentrating, and decreased ability to communicate effectively with family and peers. This bill would help individuals navigate their grief journey, providing them with targeted leave time to grieve and begin the healing process.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these considerations. Should you have any questions, or we can provide additional information, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

We sincerely appreciate the legislature’s ongoing support of our programs and your role in helping us meet our mission to honor donors, their families, and the very grateful recipients whose lives are changed through organ and tissue donation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kaiten Kennedy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kaiten Kennedy
Director of Education
The Living Legacy Foundation