

Good afternoon, my name is Jake Altman, and I'm a current freshman at York College of Pennsylvania, as well as a 2025 alumnus from the BioMedical Allied Health magnet program at Glen Burnie High in Anne Arundel County, MD. Through the BMAH programs' Community Challenge class project, I had the opportunity to learn more about organ donation, which I carried into my senior capstone project. It is this research and the experiences of one of the health teachers that have brought me here to testify and reinforce the importance of the General Assembly passing House Bill 1050.

Current legislation requires that organ donation be taught in high school health classes. However, through my research, I have learned that organ donation is a topic that is not simply about teaching facts about needs and procedures. I have learned that there is an abundance of misconceptions surrounding organ donation. A survey conducted by Donate Life America in 2010 showed that out of 5,100 respondents, over 50% of them had some sort of incorrect understanding of organ donation.

Being a former student at Glen Burnie, I had the opportunity to be taught by Matthew Bugenhagen in my health class. As a college student, he developed kidney failure and was in need of a new kidney or else he would be forced to go through dialysis to survive. Thankfully, his mother was able to donate her kidney to Mr. B so that he could continue to live a healthy, happy life. Without his intimate knowledge of the organ donation process and the research I conducted as part of my BMAH projects, I am not sure that I would have the complete understanding of what organ donation is.

According to the National Donor Waitlist, each day, 17 people die waiting for an organ as the waitlists continue to get longer (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2023). Students who can effectively understand what it means to become an organ donor can help

address this very crisis. Without Mr. Bugenhagen sharing his knowledge and experience, I am not sure my classmates would understand organ donation, the importance of being an organ donor, or how to combat misconceptions about the process. That said, the field of organ donation is constantly changing and advancing, and Mr. B's experience is not the whole picture of what organ donation entails. Given the nuance and importance of the topic and the breadth of health and physical education classes, it is essential that the curriculum be factual and informed by expert insight and guidance.

The students of today will one day become the teachers and mentors of tomorrow; they will have their own decisions to make and ideas to pass on to future generations. But with so many of these young thinkers lacking an understanding of what organ donation is, how to register as a donor, or how it can save tremendous numbers of lives, it becomes impossible to make an informed decision. Students who are informed appropriately now can make the most logical and knowledgeable decisions in the future. Passing House Bill 1050 gives today's students the ability to make the best decisions possible so that tomorrow's students can continue to make those intelligent choices for the better with the most accurate information, as advised by experts in the field.

Thank you all for this opportunity. I respectfully ask you to support and pass House Bill 1050.