

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 12, 2014

Mary K. Wakefield, PhD, RN
Administrator
Health Resources and Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Administrator Wakefield:

We are writing to express our concern regarding a concept paper released by the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) Liver and Intestine Committee in July 2014 that would change the rules governing the allocation of livers for transplant. As you know, UNOS operates under the oversight of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and we request that you take steps to ensure this concept paper is evaluated in a fair and open manner with equal time given to views in opposition to and in favor of the proposal.

If implemented, the proposal would result in dramatic adverse impacts for individuals with liver disease throughout the United States. More organs for transplant would travel significantly longer distances, areas with high organ donation rates would be disproportionately affected, organs would experience longer cold ischemic times, and the proposal may not have the desired effect of lowering overall wait list mortality. In addition, the administrative burdens and costs imposed on the organ procurement infrastructure would be unprecedented and could inadvertently reduce the number of livers available for transplant nationally.

Our immediate concern is a Liver and Intestine Committee forum scheduled for September 16 in Chicago to address the UNOS concept paper. More than 40 transplant professionals from across the country recently wrote to you expressing significant concerns regarding the scientific and economic rationales as well as the fairness of this UNOS proposal.

A review of the agenda for the upcoming meeting indicates there will not be adequate time available for discussion of alternative approaches or viewpoints. We urge you to let UNOS know you expect equal time be allotted to viewpoints that differ from the concept paper. Moreover, the concept paper should not have progressed to this point without more robust scientific evidence from prior policy changes for the allocation of livers (Share 35) that UNOS implemented only one year ago. Before proceeding with any additional changes in allocation policy, the scientific community should gather and evaluate at least three years of outcomes and quality data on Share 35. In the interim, we urge the transplant community to focus on alleviating geographic disparities by improving community education and donation rates throughout the country.

We also remain concerned that the concept paper is moving forward without full adherence to the plain meaning and intent of the language on liver allocation policy that Congress included in Conference Report 111-366 accompanying the 2010 Appropriation Act for the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development. We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kevin Yoder

Mike Pompeo

Blake Fournier

Tim Huelskamp

David Scott

Codd Reiter

John Lewis

Pete Olson

Gregg Harper

Mark Vignato

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CC: Dr. Carl Berg MD, President OPTN/UNOS Board of Directors

CC: Dr. David Mulligan MD, FACS, Chair Liver & Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee