

# **CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ON ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION**

## **by Lora Steed**

On April 23, 1996 the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee held an open hearing on "Saving Lives: Increasing Organ and Tissue Donation" in observance of National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. Senator Bill Frist (R-TN), a former heart and lung transplant surgeon, presented the opening statement (below) to the audience of over 150 attendees and satellite audiences in Houston, TX and Nashville, TN. There were six panels of witnesses (below) which included "patients, public servants, doctors, and lay people who are making a difference, and participating in the life giving miracle of trans-plantation." The goal for this hearing was to emphasize the need for increasing awareness and education for organ and tissue donation. Future hearings will be announced.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Contact: Jill Miller**

### **Sennator Bill Frist (Tennessee)**

#### **Opening Statement**

#### **"Saving Lives: increasing Organ and TA issue Donation"**

#### **Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee**

#### **April 23, 1996**

It is a pleasure to be here today as we kickoff Congressional observance of National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. This is a special day for me, because as most of you know, I am by trade a heart and lung transplant surgeon. As a medical doctor, a citizen legislator, and United States Senator, I have the privilege today of representing Tennessee, and specifically, my transplant patients who have joined us from Nashville. We have come together on behalf of transplant patients throughout the nation. And we also speak today for those whose voices are now silent: the many, many individuals who have died waiting for a life-saving organ transplant.

Though I do have an abiding personal interest in the subject matter before us, this is not simply my hearing. Senator Kassebaum has been a staunch supporter of donation, and as the Chair of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, she has provided the consistent leadership that has made this event possible. And Senator Kennedy, an active member of the bipartisan Congressional Joint Task Force on Organ and Tissue Donation, and a longtime advocate for transplantation, has also provided valuable leadership and support. Many members of the committee, including Senator DeWine, whose family's experience has made him a lifelong advocate, care very deeply about these issues. I thank each and everyone of you for taking the time to be here today. I also want to thank members of the greater transplant community, who have united with us in this effort. For once, we have laid aside many of the divisive issues to focus on that which we can all agree on: the need to increase donation. I wish that we could hear from each and every person and organization associated with transplantation, but we are simply opening the dialogue today that will continue throughout the week, as we focus on ways to save lives through increased donation.

The need for a public forum like this became very clear last November as we worked in the Labor Committee to reauthorize the National Organ Transplantation Act. (NOTA.) In our discussions regarding the many difficult issues surrounding transplantation, it became clear that the primary problem was a shortage of available organs. A number of Senators discussed many of the questions common to donation, and if memory serves me correctly, Senator Kennedy suggested that we hold a hearing to bring these questions into the public square. Senator Kassebaum immediately agreed. As a Committee, we realized that as public servants we had an obligation to do what we could to increase awareness, especially in light of the study that showed that donation could be increased by 80% simply through public education. Through this hearing, we are reaching out apart from our normal legislative duties to use our resources for public education. We look forward to hearing today, from patients, public servants, doctors, and lay people who are making a difference, and participating in the life-giving miracle of transplantation

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## WITNESS LIST

### "SAVING LIVES; THE NEED TO INCREASE ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION"

**PANEL ONE** -- Mr. Carl Lewis, Co-founder of the Wendy Marx Foundation and Olympic gold medalist (*Lewis will testify by teleconference from Houston, Texas where he is training*). Wendy Marx is a friend of Carl Lewis, and she underwent a lifesaving liver transplant at age 22.

#### **PANEL TWO**

- Senator Mike DeWine, (R-OH) -- *Senator DeWine donated his daughter's eyes when she was killed in a car accident.*
- Representative **Joe** Moakley, (D-MA) -- *Congressman Moakley had a liver transplant last July.*
- Senator Byron L. Dorgan (D-ND) -- *Senator Dorgan will speak about the Organ Donation Incentive Act, adopted unanimously as the Dorgan-Frist amendment to the Health Reform Act.*

**PANEL THREE** -- **Ciro V. Sumaya, M.D., M.P.H.T.M.:** Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services. *Dr. Sumaya will discuss the Administration's role in transplantation. He will be accompanied by the Division of Organ Transplantation's director, Judith Braslow.*

#### **PANEL FOUR**

- Mr. Rex Scott, Wingo, Kentucky -- *Scott is a lung transplant patient of Senator Frist.*
- Mr. Tom Meredith, Antioch, Tennessee -- *Meredith will testify regarding his family's decision to donate the organs of his two sons, who died in separate accidents; his wife later underwent an organ transplant.*
- Ms. Nicole Brantley, Valdosta, Georgia -- *Ms. Brantley's brother Jason died waiting for a heart-lung transplant.*

#### **PANEL FIVE**

- Dr. Ronald Ferguson, President of Ohio Transplant Consortium; Chief of Surgery at Ohio State University; Secretary of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons; and former United Network on Organ Sharing board member -- *Dr. Ferguson will discuss his experiences in the transplant community.*
- Mr. Howard M. Nathan, President, Coalition on Donation; Executive Director of Delaware Valley Transplant Program -- *Nathan will discuss a new ad campaign to increase donation featuring NBA star Michael Jordan and will discuss other efforts of the Coalition.*

#### **PANEL SIX**

- Clive Callender, M.D., F.A.C.S., Principal Investigator, National Minority Organ Tissue Transplant Education Program -- *Dr. Callender will discuss the importance of increasing minority donation, and highlight his program.*
- Mr. Bill Kemp, Sumner County Clerk, Chairman, Tennessee County Clerks Organ Donor and will discuss other efforts of the coalition.
- Awareness Foundation -- *Mr. Kemp will discuss a program that allows county clerks in Tennessee to receive a \$1.00 donation from motor vehicle registrants every time they renew or purchase license plates to promote donor awareness.*