

Dear Members of the Tax Policy Committee,

Some of you may know me from my work at Planned Parenthood, but today I am writing to you in my personal capacity to support Rep. Brabec's HB 4361.

In 2019, I donated half of my liver to my mother. She had been suffering from cirrhosis for several years and had eventually developed liver cancer. She had a few bleeding scares where we thought we might lose her, spent most days in bed due to pain, and because the liver was no longer able to effectively filter out toxins, she experienced cognitive impairment as well. Despite these symptoms, she was unlikely to receive a liver from a deceased donor any time soon. There are roughly 10,000 people on the waiting list for a liver transplant. Many will spend years waiting to be selected and some pass away before that day comes.

I am proud that I was able to donate to my mom. About 6 months after the transplant, my parents were doing some yard work and my Dad walked up to me and said, "thank you for giving me my wife back." I still tear up about that. And he was right. He got his wife back and I got my mom back. She went from barely being able to leave her room to being full of life, working alongside him in the garden. And now, 5 years later (today actually marks our 5 year "liver-versary"), she's still going strong. She's at home right now taking care of her grandson—my son. None of this would have been possible without live organ donation.

But sadly, this isn't an option for a lot of people waiting for a transplant or wanting to help a loved one. It is an incredibly privileged position to be able to take unpaid time off work to go through testing and to go through surgery and recovery. I was very lucky to have a lot of family support, but I still went back to work after only 2 weeks. Medical professionals recommend up to 3 months of recovery time before returning to work.

HB 4361 will help live organ donors to both physically and financially recover from the cost of donation and will improve health equity by making live organ donation an option for more people. It shouldn't be only the privileged and well-resourced who have the option to help their loved ones waiting for transplants. And by supporting donors, we can decrease the waitlist for organ donations, saving lives.

A live organ donors save not just one life, but two. The person they donate to, and the person who moves up the transplant list when the live organ recipient is removed.

Thank you to Rep. Brabec for standing up for live organ donors. And thank you to the fantastic transplant team at the University of Michigan who have long advocated for this change.

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