

December 10, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chair, Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
455 Dirksen Building,
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions
U.S. Senate
332 Dirksen Building,
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the Committee:

We are at a pivotal moment for our nation's organ donation and transplant system, as more than 108,000 people await the lifesaving gift of transplant. With the hearing on *"Examining the Future of the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network,"* the Committee can ensure the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) delivers meaningful modernization of the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN). Future changes must deliver measurable, patient-centered results: more transplants, fewer deaths on the waiting list, and reduced organ non-use. These are the outcomes that earn public trust and have a real impact on patients and their families.

UNOS is a Richmond-based nonprofit on a mission to save and transform lives through research, innovation, and collaboration. More than 40 years ago, HRSA first selected UNOS to help build the foundation of our nation's organ donation and transplant system. Today, that system has enabled over one million patients to receive lifesaving transplants and is recognized globally for its success and integrity. UNOS is not the OPTN. UNOS is one of several federal government contractors that support the work of the OPTN. UNOS acts as directed by and with oversight from HRSA to support OPTN operations in accordance with OPTN bylawsⁱ, policiesⁱⁱ, NOTAⁱⁱⁱ, and the Final Rule^{iv}.

In 2024, the United States achieved a record 48,149 transplants and average daily waitlist deaths declined to 13 in 2023, down from 16 in 2021^v. Although our nation's organ donation and transplant system is the most advanced in the world, it can always be improved.

UNOS supports the HRSA OPTN Modernization Initiative and increasing competition because we agree the system can be strengthened. The enactment of the Securing the U.S. Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network Act of 2023 (P.L. 118-14) bolstered HRSA's efforts to modernize the system. UNOS has supported, and championed, much of the progress for modernizing the OPTN. UNOS took the initiative in establishing its own independent UNOS Board of Directors, effective March 30, 2024, to reduce conflicts of interest and strengthen public trust^{vi}.

UNOS is dedicated to ensuring a smooth and safe transition to a multiple contractor system, the centerpiece of HRSA's OPTN Modernization. To date, we are aware of at least 15 contractors that HRSA determined eligible to support the OPTN Board of Directors and OPTN operations. We are aware that HRSA has awarded work to two other contractors at this point: one to support the OPTN Board of Directors and one to support a patient services hotline. As HRSA continues to implement their OPTN Modernization priority of increasing contractors for the OPTN, UNOS

stands ready as authorized by HRSA to leverage our decades of expertise to transition and support new contractors and strengthen the system for patients and families.

Since I became CEO in 2023, UNOS has focused on making improvements within our control; and advocating for broader reforms that require Congressional action. While much of the system operates beyond UNOS' direct support, we remain committed to strengthening it for patients. Congress must address remaining barriers to make the most significant improvements. We have identified four key reforms that, if enacted, would save more lives: 1) automated deceased donor referral, 2) real-time in transit organ tracking, 3) FAA recommendations for organ transport, and 4) aligning Medicare incentives for medically complex kidneys.

We support the U.S. Senate and U.S. House Subcommittee on Labor, HHS Appropriations Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations report language that advance these four key reforms and fully support the policies for final passage.

Our nation's organ donation and transplant system is founded on trust. To continue to earn and strengthen that trust, stakeholders, Congress and the federal government must work collaboratively to improve the system for the benefit of patients and donor families, who deserve a fair, effective and safe organ donation and transplant system.

Now is the time to act and advance meaningful, efficient, and effective modernization of the OPTN. UNOS will continue to be a partner in those efforts.

Sincerely,



Maureen McBride, PhD.
Chief Executive Officer

Attached:

- UNOS Support of Securing the OPTN Act of 2023 & OPTN Modernization
- Letter to U.S. Senate and U.S. House Subcommittee on Labor, HHS Appropriations for organ donation and transplantation system improvements

ⁱ Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network. (2024). OPTN bylaws. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. https://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/media/lgbmahi/optn_bylaws.pdf

ⁱⁱ Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network. (2024). OPTN policies. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. https://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/media/r0idd5a2/optn_policies.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ National Organ Transplant Act, Pub. L. No. 98-507, 98 Stat. 2339 (1984) (codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. §§ 273–274e).

^{iv} Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, 42 C.F.R. pt. 121 (2024)

^v United Network for Organ Sharing. (2025, April 14). *Waitlist deaths decrease under UNOS' operation of nation's organ system*. <https://unos.org/news/waitlist-deaths-decrease-under-unos-operation-of-nations-organ-system/>

^{vi} The original National Organ Transplant Act of 1984 (NOTA; Public Law 98-507) required that the OPTN be operated as a single non-profit entity. To comply with NOTA, UNOS' board had to also serve as the OPTN's board until it was amended by the Securing the U.S. OPTN Act in 2023.