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U.S. SENATOR FOR NEW MEXICO

## **Honoring Our Living Donors (HOLD) Act** *Senators Lujan and Boozman*

Every day, 17 Americans die waiting for an organ transplant. Most of these patients suffer from kidney failure and are going through grueling and expensive dialysis treatments, which collectively cost Medicare more than \$50 billion per year. Although the rate of deceased organ donation has improved in recent years, the rate of living donations has flatlined over the past two decades. This is largely due to the prohibitive costs associated with donation.

Under current law, the Living Organ Donation Reimbursement Program, which is currently administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in partnership with the University of Kansas and the American Society of Transplant Surgeons, helps low-income donors and recipients defray these costs by providing reimbursements of up to \$6,000 for many expenses related to donating an organ (e.g., travel expenses, lost wages, and child/dependent care). Research suggests that the vast majority of these donors could not have afforded to donate without this program.

However, current restrictions severely limit this program's impact. For example, 30% of donors in the program receive the full \$6,000, and income rules disqualify donors based on whether the donor and recipient combined make more than 350% of the federal poverty level (currently \$53,000/year for an individual).

More than 92,000 Americans are on a waiting list in the hope of receiving a kidney transplant. The number of living donations has always been low, around 6,000 per year, and has trended downward even as the demand for organs has increased. The expense for the donor is an important reason why so few people are donating.

The **Honoring Our Living Donors (HOLD) Act** would address these issues by:

1. Prohibiting the consideration of recipient income when determining eligibility for financial reimbursement to support more low- and middle-income donors.
2. Delivering savings to Medicare by increasing living donation.
3. Assessing the efficacy of the Living Organ Donation Reimbursement Program through an annual report to Congress.

***This legislation is endorsed by:*** *Waitlist Zero, National Kidney Foundation, American Society of Nephrology, American Kidney Fund.*