



January 12, 2018

Senator Vicki Schmidt
Chair, Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: Ensuring nondiscrimination of organ transplants on the basis of disability (HB 2343)

Dear Senator Schmidt and the Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

As the leading human rights organization for all individuals with Down syndrome, the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) *strongly supports* the passage of HB 2343, the Ensuring nondiscrimination of organ transplants on the basis of disability.

NDSS is the largest nonprofit representing and advocating for people with Down syndrome and their families. With over 375 affiliate groups spanning across all 50 states, NDSS has worked tirelessly on the federal and state levels to break down barriers and create opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome to be included in all aspects of society and fulfill their hopes and dreams. Advancing science and medicine has allowed individuals with Down syndrome from having an average life span of 9 years in 1980, to 60 years old in 2017. Individuals with Down syndrome are living longer, healthier lives, are attending postsecondary education programs, obtaining employment, getting married, living independently and are productive members of their local communities.

HB 2343 acknowledges that when individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities “in other states nationwide, individuals with mental and physical disabilities have historically been denied life-saving organ transplant discrimination based on assumptions that their lives are less worthy, that they are incapable of complying with post-transplantation medical requirements, or that they lack adequate support systems to ensure compliance with post transplantation medical requirements.” This bill seeks to affirm the Kansas legislature’s commitment to eliminate discrimination by ensuring that individuals with disabilities are not denied access to organ transplants based solely on their disability.

Nondiscrimination in organ transplantation bills have been enacted in California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon and Delaware. Other states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York currently have similar bills introduced into their legislator.

We hope that Kansas will join these states in eliminating discrimination on the basis of disability. This bill is a positive step in that direction and will save lives. Thank you for your leadership with regards to this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sara Hart Weir", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sara Hart Weir, MS
President & CEO
National Down Syndrome Society
8 East 41st St, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10017