

March 17, 2025

AMAT Statement on Arkansas House Bill 1679

As the Association for Multicultural Affairs in Transplantation (AMAT), we are dedicated to educating minority communities about the lifesaving power of organ, eye, and tissue donation while advocating for equitable policies that improve transplantation access and outcomes.

We strongly oppose Arkansas House Bill 1679, which would allow a third party to modify or revoke a legally documented anatomical gift made by an individual. This bill undermines the integrity of personal autonomy in donation decisions, a core principle that encourages public trust in the donation and transplantation system.

If enacted, this legislation would:

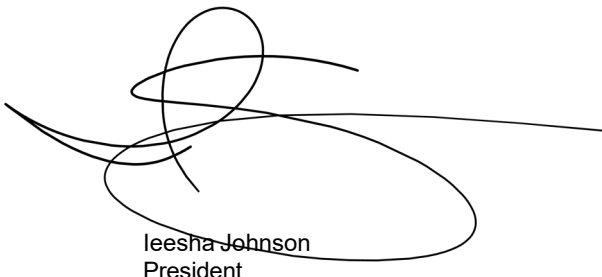
- **Increase wait times** for patients already on an overburdened transplant waitlist, further delaying the chance for a lifesaving organ and leading to unnecessary deaths, particularly in communities of color, where disparities in access to transplantation are already pronounced.
- **Prevent waitlisted patients from receiving a transplant** by allowing next of kin to override a donor's legally authorized decision. This could result in fewer available organs, leaving those on the transplant waitlist without a second chance at life. Additionally, the loss of personal decision-making power could discourage people from registering as organ donors, further reducing the number of transplants performed.
- **Deepen medical mistrust, particularly among marginalized, underserved, and rural communities.** By overriding an individual's explicit donation decision, this bill reinforces existing fears and skepticism about the medical system, particularly in communities that have historically experienced healthcare discrimination. Medical mistrust remains a major barrier to organ donation, and policies that strip away autonomy will only discourage participation, reduce donor registrations, and ultimately result in fewer transplants for those in need.

This bill is especially concerning given the existing racial disparities in transplantation. Currently, 61% of those waiting for a lifesaving transplant are people of color, yet only 28.6% of deceased organ donors come from non-white communities. Any policy that deters donor registration will only widen this gap and further exacerbate inequities in healthcare access.

At AMAT, we believe that every individual should have the right to make a decision, both in life and in death. Policies that strip away this autonomy disproportionately harm minority communities, which already face systemic barriers in healthcare.

We urge Arkansas legislators to reject HB 1679 and instead support measures that strengthen public trust in organ donation, ensure donor decisions are honored, and promote equitable access to transplantation for waitlisted patients.

Sincerely,



Leesha Johnson
President