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June 13, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation  
United States Senate  
167 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz:

I am writing on behalf of the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO) to commend you for including a provision, i.e., Section 737, in the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2023* that directs the agency to issue regulations to require organs designated for transplant to be carried “above wing” rather than as standard cargo.

AOPO is the national representative of 48 federally designated, non-profit Organ Procurement Organizations (OPOs) in the United States, together serving millions of Americans. As an organization, AOPO is dedicated to providing education, information sharing, research, technical assistance, and collaboration with OPOs, other stakeholders, and federal agencies to continue this nation’s world-leading transplantation rates while consistently improving towards the singular goal of saving as many lives as possible.

Commercial airlines play a pivotal role in the transportation of donor organs. Prior to 9/11, donated organs were transported by commercial airlines and were generally placed in the cabin, in the cockpit, or under the supervision of the flight crew. However, after 9/11, unaccompanied donor organs were reclassified as cargo and required to be placed with checked baggage in the cargo hold, significantly extending the length of time to transfer an organ between donor hospital and transplant center. In addition, this also increased the likelihood organs could be lost, mishandled, and/or irreparably damaged in transport.

Section 737 of the Senate legislation addresses these organ transportation challenges. It requires the FAA, working with relevant federal agencies and stakeholders, to “establish a safe, standardized process for a commercial airline’s acceptance, handling, management, and transportation of an organ in the cabin of the aircraft.” This change will result in much more efficient and timely transportation of donor organs, greatly benefiting organ recipients and honoring donors and their families who are giving the gift of life.

AOPO appreciates your leadership on this important issue and looks forward to continuing to work with you as the legislative process moves ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Barry C. Massa".

Barry Massa

President

[Association of Organ Procurement Organizations](http://aopo.org) (AOPO)

8300 Greensboro Drive, #L1-620

McLean, VA 22102

cc: U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation members