

April 6, 2026

Rhode Island State House
House Finance Committee
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence RI, 02903

Re: Support for House Bill 7159— Living Donor Leave for Public Employees

Dear Chair Abney, Vice Chair Slater, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the people we serve in Rhode Island, including the more than 1,900 Rhode Islanders currently living with kidney failure, **we respectfully request your support for House Bill 7159, sponsored by Representative Jay Edwards.** This legislation takes a comprehensive, balanced, and fiscally responsible approach to protecting living organ donors by addressing the last piece of the puzzle to make paid leave possible for any living organ donor.

The American Kidney Fund (AKF) is the nation's leading nonprofit organization working on behalf of the **1 in 7 American adults living with kidney disease**, and the millions more at risk. AKF provides direct financial assistance, education, and advocacy to support patients from prevention and early detection through post-transplant living.

Across the United States, more than **103,000 people** are currently waiting for an organ transplant, including over **90,000 individuals waiting for a kidney.** The wait for a kidney transplant from a deceased donor can last **three to five years**, and **13 people die every day** while waiting. In Rhode Island, more than **380 residents remain on the transplant waiting list**, with dialysis as their only alternative.

Living donors play a critical role in saving lives and reducing wait times. When someone donates a kidney to a relative, a friend, or a stranger, they shorten the transplant waiting list for everyone else. Living-donor kidneys last **5 to 10 years longer** than kidneys from deceased donors, function better, and result in fewer complications and repeat transplants. In 2025, Rhode Island performed **49 kidney transplants**, including 19 **from living donors**, yet many more lives could be saved if barriers to donation were removed.

Last session, Rhode Island passed SB 829, which provided access to the Temporary Disability Insurance for living organ donors who were recovering from donating an organ. With most private sector employees now covered for paid leave after giving the gift of life, HB 7159 brings that coverage to almost 100%.

What House Bill 7159 Does

Strengthens and Expands Paid Leave for Public Employees

This bill would provide Rhode Island state employees who have worked at least 1,250 hours in the previous 12 months with up to 60 days of paid leave for medical recovery after a kidney or liver segment donation and 30 days after a bone marrow donation. Sick leave would not be required to be exhausted before utilizing this new living organ donor leave.

Why This Matters for Rhode Island

- **Growing Need:** More than 1,900 Rhode Islanders are living with kidney failure, and transplant demand continues to rise.
- **Missed Opportunities:** In 2024, only **1 in 8 Rhode Islanders** on the transplant waiting list received a transplant.
- **Economic Impact:** Dialysis is far more expensive than transplantation and often prevents patients from working. Successful transplants reduce long-term Medicaid spending and help people return to the workforce.
- **Proven Policy:** More than **39 states** have provided either job-protected or paid leave for their public sector employees with strong bipartisan support

House Bill 7159 represents a thoughtful solution that protects donors, strengthens the workforce, and saves lives. After great strides made in previous sessions, this bill would be the measure that would get Rhode Island to an A on AKF's Living Donor Protection Report Card.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask that you **report HB7159 favorably out of committee**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you for your time,



Jon Hoffman
Senior Director, State Policy and Advocacy