



NATIONAL KIDNEY
FOUNDATION®

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March 15, 2024

Maureen McBride, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
United Network for Organ Sharing
700 North 4th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: OPTN Board Contract Extension

Dear Dr. McBride,

The National Kidney Foundation (NKF) writes to express our concern regarding the pending expiration of the United Network of Organ Sharing (UNOS) board contract. NKF strongly urges the UNOS to extend the board contract deadline for 90 days to allow the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to establish an independent corporation to house the Board of Directors of the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network (OPTN).

The independence of the board is an essential element of our efforts to make the transplant system more patient centric, transparent, and accountable. Reports that UNOS is planning to establish a subsidiary to house the OPTN board are deeply alarming. Such a move would fly in the face of Congressional intent, undermine public confidence in the independence of the board, and diminish any faith or goodwill that UNOS is operating in the best interest of the patients it purports to serve.

More than 103,000 individuals on the national transplant list are awaiting life-saving organ transplants; some of them will die today, and more will die tomorrow. Those patients need to have confidence that the transplant system is fully functioning and that their likelihood of receiving a transplant is not impeded by bureaucratic processes and self-serving contract negotiations. We urge UNOS to resolve this matter with HRSA expeditiously and return focus to the patients relying on the system.

During the February 2024 special comment period for the policy proposal to “Address the Relationship of the OPTN and OPTN Contractor Boards,” the majority of the public commentary supports separation of the OPTN and OPTN Contractor Boards, and many people conveyed their concerns about the quick pace of implementation. The public, HRSA, and NKF have pleaded for UNOS to exercise restraint and execute this change with transparency, diplomacy, while keeping patients at the forefront.

Lastly, as the modernization effort continues to unfold, the American public – patients especially – need to have confidence that the contractor selected puts the interest of *patients* first. By working with HRSA to cleanly extend the contract, maintain operations during the transition, and put patients first, UNOS would bolster its position and demonstrate that it can be a reliable and trusted partner in the future. We urge you to work with HRSA to find a prompt resolution to this matter.

NKF stands ready to support UNOS and HRSA through this initiative. Please email Morgan Reid, Director of Transplant Policy and Strategy, at Morgan.Reid@kidney.org with any questions.

Sincerely,



Kevin Longino
CEO and Transplant Patient



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President

CC: Carole Johnson
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