



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo Announces Senate Passage of Legislation to Improve Access to Organ Donations

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. April 21, 2011

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Senator Charles J. Fuschillo Jr. (R-Merrick) announced that the State Senate recently passed legislation to help increase the number of organ and tissue donors in New York State. The legislation would help increase the number of eligible and willing organ donors by requiring driver's license applicants to specifically indicate their donation decision.

"One person can save up to eight lives by donating their organs. Raising awareness about organ donation and making it easier for residents to become organ donors will help give the gift of life that thousands of people desperately need," said Senator Fuschillo.

In New York, more than 9,300 people are on the list for organ transplants. However, the state has ranked last in the number of organ donors signed up through their DMV program. In 2009, New York ranked last in the nation, signing up only 11 percent (or 427,562) of the 3.8 million people who received a driver's license or a non-driver's identification. In contrast, the national average is 43 percent, with states such as Utah and Iowa averaging as high as 65-70 percent.

The legislation is named "Lauren's Law" after 11-year old Lauren Shields, who strongly advocated for its passage. Lauren was the victim of a heart-attacking virus which caused her to gradually weaken to the point that she was kept alive only by cardiac and respiratory life support. With a heart transplant as her only hope, doctors were lucky enough to have found her a healthy donor heart just in time. Since the transplant and her miraculous recovery, Shields has been on a mission to make it easier for children and adults awaiting transplants to more quickly receive donor organs.

"As a two-time kidney transplant recipient I have firsthand experience with the tremendous impact organ donors can have on the lives of others," said Assemblyman James Conte (R-Huntington Staion). "By passing Lauren's Law, we can help save lives and increase the quality of life for thousands of New Yorkers by increasing organ and tissue donor enrollments throughout the state."

Lauren's Law would prohibit a driver's license application from being processed unless the organ donation section is filled out. Applicants would have to check a box stating "yes," or "not at this time." There currently is an organ donation section on the application, but it is not required to be filled out.

The legislation has been sent to the Assembly for consideration.

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