



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Chris Jacobs

Senator Jacobs, Assemblyman Kearns Celebrate Donate Life Month, Announce Legislation To Increase Organ, Eye & Tissue Donations

SENATOR JACOBS April 28, 2017

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BUFFALO, NY- Friday, April 28th, 2017 - Assemblyman Mickey Kearns (D- West Seneca) and Senator Chris Jacobs (R- Buffalo) joined by Unyts President and CEO Mark Simon celebrated the end of Donate Life Month by encouraging Western New Yorkers to sign up in the NYS donor registry year round. April 2017 was designated as Donate Life Month as a way to raise public awareness about the critical need for more organ, eye and tissue donor registrations.

Legislation was introduced in the Senate earlier this year (S5283A) by Senator Jacobs and a companion bill will be introduced in the Assembly soon that will further the expansion of access to organ donor registration by including a 'Check-Yes' box on SUNY and CUNY applications as well as on Library card applications. In addition to supporting this legislation, Kearns and Jacobs were both supporters of, and advocates for, the more than \$1.6 million included in the 2017-2018 NYS budget, to promote and educate people about organ, eye and tissue donation.

"Each year the waiting list for organ transplants grows longer. Sadly, many people die before an organ becomes available," said Assemblyman Michael P. Kearns (D- West Seneca). "The need for organ donation is real and urgent. For that reason, I'm proud to sponsor legislation in the Assembly, put forth by Senator Jacobs in the Senate, to include 'Check-Yes' boxes on SUNY and CUNY applications and library card applications. I have had friends and colleagues who have benefited from the 'gift of life', and I want to thank organizations like Unyts for continuing their advocacy and educating communities about organ donation. Buffalo is the city of good neighbors, and signing up with the NYS Organ and Tissue Donor Registry is one of the most important ways we can give back to our community."

"Right now the primary vehicles for registering for organ donation are through the Department of Motor Vehicles or the Board of Elections. Unfortunately, a significant portion of New York City residents don't drive and too many others don't vote so they have no interaction with the Board of Elections," said Senator Jacobs. "Our hope is that through our legislation, more people, particularly younger generations will get exposed to the concept of organ donation earlier in life and hopefully sign up," Jacobs added.

Unyts is Western New York's only organ, eye, tissue and community blood center with a commitment to save and enhance lives through organ, eye, tissue and blood donation, while maintaining respect for those who give the gift of life. Unyts is the federally designated

organ procurement organization for the eight counties of Western New York.

“Senator Jacobs and Assemblyman Kearns understand the great need for organ, eye and tissue donation, and the importance of providing more opportunities for people to register as donors,” said Mark Simon, president and CEO of Unyts. “As we celebrate Donate Life Month, we appreciate their support and the generosity of all of those who have joined the New York State Donate Life Registry.”

Nearly 10,000 New Yorkers are currently waiting for organ transplants. New York has the third highest need for donors in the country, yet it is also the second lowest percentage of registered donors. Each year, an estimated 500 men, women and children in New York die because of the shortage of donors. Currently, there are 282,838 individuals enrolled in the NYS Donor Registry in Erie County.

Over the last three years the NYS Legislature has taken several measures to work with organizations, such as Unyts, to promote, inform and encourage individuals about organ, eye and tissue donation. In 2016, the NYS Legislature expanded the option for organ donation registration, allowing for individuals 16 and 17 years of age to become eligible to register as organ donors. Kearns and Jacobs hope more awareness efforts like Donate Life Month, and passage of the recently proposed legislation to increase access to registration will start to have a more forceful impact in increasing the number of potential donors.

For more information and to register in the New York state Donate Life Organ and Tissue Donor Registry individuals can contact the Erie County Auto Bureau’s call center, and visit www.nydrivers4life.com or www.unyts.org