

Secretary Alexi Giannoulias Honors Donor Families

by Erin Henkel
April 18 2024 1:10 PM



SPRINGFIELD - Organ and tissue donor and recipient families were honored at the Illinois State Capitol Building today as part of Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias' efforts to raise awareness on the impact of organ donation.

Giannoulias along with state Sen. Christopher Belt (57th Senate District), state Rep. Nabeela Syed (51st House District) and Mid-America Transplant celebrated National Donate Life month and honored donors and their families.

“Organ and tissue donation provides individuals with a sacred second chance at life and brings something beautiful out of tragedy,” Giannoulias said. “I am humbled to be given the opportunity to honor our donors and to share the story of their sacrifice. We owe it to those who have donated and those who are waiting to talk about this issue and increase awareness.”

Illinois has one of the largest registries in the nation, averaging around 20,000 sign-ups per month across DMV facilities with around 6.5 million current registrants. Since the program's creation, there have been 7.7 million registrations.

"It is truly a privilege to be the stewards of donors' lifesaving gifts, and to help families create a lasting legacy for their loved one," said Kevin Lee, president, and CEO at Mid-America Transplant. "This past year, 478 generous donors and families from downstate Illinois made the courageous decision to say yes to donation. Those patients now have a second chance at life, thanks to donor families."

In 2023, there were 2,259 transplants in the state. Of those who donated and were issued a state ID or driver's license, 75% were registered organ donors.

"I received a kidney donation after I was living on dialysis for a year and I know first-hand the impact a donor can have," said Belt. "I am grateful to my donor for every breath I take and that I have a second chance at life."

Approximately 300 Illinoisans die each year waiting for a transplant, and some 4,000 people remain on the waiting list at any given time.

"I recognize the profound impact of my decision to become an organ donor—it's the gift of new life. Yet too many people still await this gift," said Syed. "It is our job to raise awareness of the beauty of donation and encourage more people to register."

To join the millions of Illinoisans who have already signed up, individuals can visit LifeGoesOn.com, complete the registration card found in the donor brochure, call 800-210-2106 or visit a DMV.

Any Illinoisan with a valid Illinois driver's license or state ID card can become a donor.

Additional activities this month include a statewide organ and tissue donor registration ad campaign highlighting Tonisha Daniel's story, partnering with planetariums to register potential donors, health fairs, donor registration drives, and visits to high school driver's education classes throughout the state to educate 15-and 16-year-olds about donation before receiving their driver's licenses.