UPDATE

A recent Letter to the Editor which The BayNet featured that was critical of the organ donation program has created quite a response. Many individuals who have benefited from organ donations or have aided others through the donations of a lost loved one’s organs, unlike the person who submitted the letter, have characterized their experiences as positive.

Unsurprisingly, agencies involved in the harvesting of organs have taken umbrage to the letter writer’s comments and The BayNet’s presentation of those remarks.

To be clear, The BayNet is determined to tell both sides of this story and we welcome responses from both sides. Anyone wishing to comment may submit their remarks to news@thebaynet.com or contact us during normal business hours at 240-309-4009.

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An alarming, eye-opening situation has been brought to our attention by a reader of The BayNet. It concerns pending legislation in the Maryland General Assembly and quick response by citizens is essential since there isn’t much time to weigh in on what’s proposed. The reader recently submitted the following letter regarding organ donation and a first-hand account from a family member about how both sides of the issue are not being told. The legislation would mandate the telling of only one side of this issue to impressionable youngsters who are learning how to drive. A hearing on the Maryland Organ Donation Driver Education Act of 2016 (House Bill 1224) is scheduled for Friday, March 4 at 1 p.m. The House Environment and Transportation Committee will consider the proposed measure, which could go into effect Oct. 1 of this year if it is passed by the legislature.

The information provided by the reader is eye-opening and we felt that it should be shared with the citizens of our state.

Did you know that being an organ donor could possibly mean:

- Having your organs removed while you’re still alive, without anesthesia?
- That your empty body is filled with PVC piping and various other materials?
- That your organs could sit in a warehouse, waiting for the highest bidder to use them for research?
- That if a family wishes to save their own loved one with your organs, they may end up paying an astronomical price?

For full details and consideration of this Act, please see the letter below.

To Every Citizen in Maryland, please find below a copy of the letter I have written to Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., Senate President, (of Maryland) with copies to other pertinent Congressman. I would sincerely appreciate your review of its content and help the public to be enlightened to help stop the above-subject Acts, the way they are written now. (Maryland's Organ Donation Driver Education Act of 2016 is scheduled to go into effect on October 1, 2016. It is in the Maryland House for Hearing on March 4, 2016 at 1:00 pm.)

This ACT will affect ALL CITIZENS! This Act along with the Documentary both NEED to be revamped with full-disclosure to the public of both the “PROS” and the “CONS” and everything that happens in between. Not only should this Act in Maryland be reviewed and rewritten; we presently have another Federal Act, (S.1435) Organ Donation Awareness and Promotion Act of 2015 in the Senate.

This act is also completely one-sided. The beautiful scenario of a donor saving someone’s life is repeated over and over again—but not any wording disclosing the reality as to what takes place to the donor himself or the effects on their family members. (Nor is it disclosed as to the astronomical profits the donor organizations and their executives are banking, from our organ and body donations!) All local, state and federal government agencies should be held accountable for educating the entire public with FULL-DISCLOSURE of the beginning-to-the-end process. Not just the beauty that the Donor Organizations want to impress you with.

Everyone needs to carefully consider all aspects of both these very serious Acts. I am pleading with you to help make all citizens in this tri-county area, as well as all citizens in Maryland aware of these Acts and their serious consequences.

Dear Senator Miller,

It is with GREAT URGENCY that I am pleading to you for your assistance and help to divert and stop the Organ Donation Driver Education Act of 2016, with the effective date of October 1, 2016.

I have personally been involved in the check-the-block on your driver’s license to donate your organs. My 40-year old son died from brain death and on his drivers’ license he had checked the box to be a donor. My family and I were approached by the Gift of Life, Donor Program and was described the “perfect scenario” as to how the specialty surgical team would be orchestrating the removal of his organs, which included his heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas, intestines (including stomach), eyes/corneas, bone (upper and Lower), skin, vessels and tendons of the legs and vertebral bodies, his blood, blood vessels, lymph nodes, spleen, etc. He could be a “complete body” donor, utilizing every part of his body, as he was a very fit young man. The representative from the donor organization, told us you could stop this procedure even up to the moment before it occurred. He also emphasized and expressed what a beautiful gift it was “to donate” your or your loved ones’ organs.

How they would already have recipients lined-up, and waiting at their destination, to receive the vital organs. The remainder of all the other parts would go for research. He painted a “very beautiful picture".
What the Donor Organization Representatives fail to enlighten you on, is that you have to leave your loved-one hooked-up on life-support for them to perform their surgeries. (That they can also take your loved one from that hospital to an out-of-state destination to perform the removals, which could take a lengthy amount of time.) That there is “no team” of expert surgeons to take care of removing the organs. Also, no anesthetic is administered because to them the individual is already considered to be dead. (It was described to me, that my son was already dead and could not feel the pain anyway. Like the theory when a chicken's head is cut-off, its body plops around because of nerve reactions—not pain.)

There is no medical or scientific proof, that when a person is declared “brain dead” that the other part of their brain is dead also. The remainder part is still working and allows them to think, remember and hear. (The hearing is said to be the last thing to leave you.) It is not until that last breath is taken, before your loved ones' life has ended.

The Donor Organization tells you that you will have a body for the funeral home; but fail to tell you that it is filled with PVC piping and various substances to stuff it with, and CANNOT be embalmed as they normally would do. The beautiful picture painted is that you are “DONATING” the organs to someone waiting for them, that your donation will give them Life.

BUT, in reality, the recipient pays high-dollar for the organs that you donate. Warehouses are stock-plied with body parts and pieces and tissues, being sold to the highest bidders for their research or for whatever they are going to use them for. The top executives in these organizations are earning six-digit incomes, And, in some areas, reaping a $900,000 compensation. These organizations post surpluses each year, showing great profits, and padding their savings to $929 million dollars and more. Our “donated” body parts fuel a multimillion-dollar industry in which the donor helps to save a life, and the wonderful life saved, is obscured by the money-making opportunities for the organ procurement industry.

Donor families sometimes get a thank-you note, but not much more (and they are not even promised that.) Recipients of these donated organs “DO NOT” receive them without a huge cost. Their families have the burden of the astronomical cost for that organ.

When you or your loved one is a donor – the family is removed from all decision-making. The Donor Organization takes over and they are in complete control. Our court system takes sides with the donor organizations. (Simply, because of that check-mark on that drivers' license that states they are a donor.)

I was in the process finding out how to start legislation that would enable ALL DRIVERS to be aware of the “full-story” about of what your family will endure when your loved one is declared “dead”. The donor needs to have a better understanding before they check that “Donor Box.” When checking to see if there were any type of bills addressing this issue, I discovered the “Organ Donation Driver Education Act of 2016” that was already in motion. That there is a 15-minute documentary provided by the Donor Organizations revealing only that beautiful scenario that they want the public to see and how you are helping others to live. The entire population needs to be educated on the entire process. Watching the documentary as it exists now, never mentions anything about the procedure or reality—only the people with their life-saving stories. All of the “Pros” are presented; but no “Cons” are touched upon for the public to review or and be properly educated to make a conscientious decision.

Senator Miller, I believe that they can have their “pro” documentary; but, in order to make an honest, rational decision, the “cons” need to be addressed and also viewed in that documentary. This would allow people to understand and make an honest judgment in making this crucial decision. There is no way for anyone to know how the donor program actually works, unless you have researched it thoroughly before-hand; or have been a direct victim involved in a dying or the death of a loved-one that previously made the decision to be a donor. Family members will then be faced with the realism as to what is happening; and then it is too late and is beyond their control.

The Donor Program Organizations (in their own disclosure statements) expect thousands of people to check that box and be donors, once they have viewed their personalized-endorsed documentary. They do not see that person, or the families; they are programed to do their jobs. Overall, they see the opportunity to make even more money.

My daughter and I endured this first hand. We dealt one-on-one with two donor organization representatives. The first one painted the beautiful picture of how your loved one will live-on through the bodies of others. Then the second representative, showing up at your loved-ones' bedside, holding a large bag of vials, wanting to “speed” the process up, because of the bad weather coming in. (My son had not even been declared dead yet.) This representative was cold and heartless and wanted to argue at his bedside. She wanted his organs, but he was still alive! This representative did not care what a mother, sister and family were going through and was only concerned about her job she needed to perform. The donor organization and its representatives were only interested in the potential value of his organs; while this young man was still struggling for his life. The court system takes sides with the donor organizations. (Simply, because of that check-mark on that drivers' license that states they are a donor.)

I sincerely “Thank You” for your immediate review. I, myself, along with my family members and many friends are willing to do whatever it takes to get this Act stopped the way it is written now. In order for it be acceptable and enacted into law, it needs to be reconstructed and reflect the truth pertaining to all aspects of the organ donation program. I give you my utmost respect. I place my faith in your judgment and wisdom, as you have always compassionately shown the best interest for the citizens of Maryland.

Senator Miller, please carefully review this matter, as it is of extreme importance and affects each and every one of us.
cc: Senator Barbara A. Mikulski, Congressman Steny Hoyer, Governor Larry Hogan; and delegates Clarence K. Lam, Barbara A. Frush, Frank S. Turner, Mark N. Fisher, Anthony J. O’Donnell, Michael A. Jackson and Jay Walker