

Report Highlights

A Performance Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Program

House Resolution 698 of 2006 directed the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) to conduct a performance evaluation of the Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Program (OTDAP). As authorized by Act 1994-102, the purpose of the program is to increase organ and tissue donation rates in the Commonwealth, primarily through public education and awareness programs and activities.

Summary of Findings: (See pp. S-1 to S-14.)

1. Advances in medical science and technology have made organ and tissue transplants increasingly common and successful medical procedures. In 2006, a record 8,022 deceased donors provided over 22,000 transplanted organs nationwide. In PA, 587 deceased donors accounted for 1,859 transplants.

2. Despite recent increases in donation, the gap between the supply of transplantable organs and the number of patients on waiting lists continues to widen. As of March 9, 2007, 94,857 people were waiting to receive an organ transplant in the United States, and approximately 18 die each day because too few organs are available. PA's waiting list as of March of this year was 6,672.

3. Many states have initiated special organ and tissue donation awareness programs to raise public awareness of the need for more donors and improved donation practices. With the passage of Act 1994-102, PA was at the forefront of this movement.

4. Through a strong, multi-agency collaborative effort, four state agencies (Health, Education, Transportation, and Revenue), an Organ Donation Advisory Committee, and the federally-designated organ procurement organizations that serve PA, have made significant progress since 1994 in promoting awareness and increasing donation and transplantation.

5. Prior to the passage of Act 102, PA did not have a statewide database of organ and tissue donors. However, since the start of the program, the Commonwealth has built an organ and tissue donor registry that, as of March 1, 2007, included 4,006,425 Pennsylvanians, or 43.2 percent of the state's total licensed driver population. Donor designation among individual counties ranges from a low of 29.3 percent in Philadelphia County to a high of 53.8 percent in Centre County.

6. PA has become a national leader in organ donation and transplantation. Among the nation's

most populous states, PA ranked first in 2006 in the number of deceased organ donors recovered (47.2 per million pop.) and the number of deceased donor transplants performed (149.4 per million pop).

7. Between 1994 and June 30, 2006, a total of \$6.2 million was spent to implement OTDAP, with about two-thirds of program revenues coming from voluntary citizen contributions. Program spending has been in compliance with statutory requirements and has provided a solid return on investment.

8. Despite the many accomplishments made through OTDAP, since 1994, much remains to be done to further expand donor designation in PA and, both operational and legislative changes will be needed. Due to space limitations, it is not possible to list and discuss all these changes here. The nature of the problems and issues we identified are, however, apparent from the recommendations cited below.

Recommendations: (See pp. S-15 to S-41.)

The report recommends that: the program be specifically established and defined in statute; a full-time state "Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Coordinator" position be created; a revenue enhancement strategy be developed, including giving Pennsylvanians the option to contribute "\$1 or more" rather than the current \$1; additional activities be considered for the program's statewide public awareness campaign, including a "PA State Employees Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Workplace Initiative" and addressing deficiencies in the direct marketing methods used to present the donation option at PennDOT photo-licensing centers; actions be taken to expand the use of a special organ/tissue donation awareness curriculum framework for secondary schools; questions be resolved related to the provision of certain expense benefits to donors/donor families, including the eligibility of tissue (not just organ) donors to receive benefits and the legality, under federal law, of a program proposal to reimburse a portion of organ donors' funeral expenses; and administrative matters related to the Organ Donation Advisory Committee be addressed. Please see the report for additional recommendations.