



For Immediate Release: 10/16/2017

GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

**GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES MEASURES TO
INCREASE ORGAN DONATIONS IN NEW YORK STATE**

***Governor Signs [Executive Order](#) Directing State Health
Department to Work with State Agencies in Making Organ
Donation Enrollment Options More Available to the Public***

***Governor Signs Legislation Making Lauren's Law Permanent
in New York State***

***Department of Health Partners with New York Alliance for
Donation to Create a Modern Registry and Expand Education
Outreach Statewide***

***More Than 84,000 New Yorkers Register for Donate Life
Registry Through Expanded Outreach Efforts in 2017***

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a series of measures aimed at increasing organ donation in New York State. These actions include signing an Executive Order that directs the State Health Department to work with all state agencies to provide the public with additional opportunities to become an organ donor through the new Donate Life Registry.

Governor Cuomo also signed legislation making "Lauren's Law" permanent in New York State, and an updated, state-of-the-art Donate Life Registry launched to streamline the organ donor registration process.

"These aggressive steps break down barriers and take proactive action to encourage more New Yorkers to become organ donors, while helping to save countless lives in the process," **Governor Cuomo said.** "I encourage all New Yorkers to take action, become an organ donor and help us create a healthier and stronger Empire State for all."

The measures include:

Executive Order Increases Enrollment Opportunities

Governor Cuomo signed an [Executive Order](#) that directs the Department of Health to work with the Transplant Council, New York Alliance for Donation, providers, and hospital systems licensed to provide organ transplant services, to develop opportunities to increase the number of registered organ donors in the state.

Additionally, the order directs state agencies to work with the Department of Health to provide opportunities for individuals to enroll in the New York State Donate Life Registry when applying for government benefits, services, and licenses. The Department of Health and the Office of Information Technology Services will make staff available to provide agencies with any assistance that may be necessary to ensure a seamless, effective implementation.

Research shows that while most New Yorkers support organ donation, only 28 percent of New York's eligible population is enrolled as an organ donor. To encourage New Yorkers to enroll in the registry, the State will expand opportunities to enroll and make it easier than ever to help save a life by becoming an organ

donor. According to the federal [Organ Procurement and Transplant Network](#), nearly 10,000 New Yorkers are currently on a list of the more than 118,000 people nationwide waiting for an organ transplant. On average, 22 people die each day in the United States from causes that could have been treated with a donated organ. In addition, tissue donated by one person can positively impact the lives of more than 50 other people.

Lauren's Law Becomes Permanent

Governor Cuomo also signed a bill (S01206/A05179), removing the expiration language from Lauren's Law, making it permanent in New York State.

Lauren's Law was originally signed by Governor Cuomo in October 2012, and was named for Lauren Shields, a Rockland County resident who received a life-saving heart transplant at age 9 and has since been a formidable advocate for organ donation. Under the original legislation, language was changed on the Department of Motor Vehicles license renewal form to highlight the choice for New Yorkers to enroll in the NYS Donate Life Registry. Customers are required to check one of the two boxes related to organ donation in order for their application to be processed

Expanded Donate Life Registry

To further bolster enrollment in the New York State Donate Life Registry, the Department of Health worked with the New York Alliance for Donation to launch a modern and expanded [registry](#). Enhancements include a more accessible and user-friendly website and the ability to access the registry from multiple state websites, thereby streamlining the registration process. The current registry was launched nearly 10 years ago. The more modern registry application better connects users and offers social media sharing options.

Expanded Organ Donation Registration Initiatives in 2017

Today's announcements build upon two recent initiatives that have already significantly increased enrollment efforts. In May 2016, Governor Cuomo signed legislation requiring NY State of Health, New York's official health plan marketplace, to add the organ donation component to its health insurance application. As of [April 21, 2017](#), individuals completing an application, renewing a plan, or making a life status change are now asked if they would like to be added to the NYS Donate Life Registry. Since adding the enrollment option to its marketplace application, over 63,164 New Yorkers have become active enrollees in the New York State Donate Life Registry.

In August 2016, Governor Cuomo signed legislation to authorize 16 and 17 year-olds to register their consent to donate at the same time they first apply for a driver license, learner permit or non-driver ID. Since the law took effect on [February 14, 2017](#), a total of nearly 21,000 New Yorkers aged 16 and 17 have become active in the New York State Donate Life Registry.

Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said, "Millions of New Yorkers have made the selfless decision to become organ donors, and now we're making it easier than ever before for others to follow in their footsteps. Under Governor Cuomo's leadership we've created a more user-friendly registry and we're increasing opportunities to connect potential donors with those who may benefit greatly from this incredible generosity."

DMV Executive Deputy Commissioner Terri Egan said, "At the Department of Motor Vehicles, we are proud to have been an early partner with DOH in offering people the opportunity to sign up to be organ donors when they apply for or renew their licenses online or at any of our offices. We look forward to being part of further outreach efforts in the future because we know how vitally important it is to patients who await these life-saving donations."

Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan said, "Whether checking a box on a DMV form or signing up directly through the Donate Life Registry, becoming an organ and tissue donor may seem like a minor choice to some - but for many across the state, donations and transplants can make all the difference in the world. I commend Governor Cuomo for taking these important steps today to complement the Senate's ongoing efforts to raise public awareness and direct resources to increase the number of life-saving organ donors in the state. As a proudly registered donor and proponent of organ donation, I urge all my fellow New Yorkers to sign up and help make a huge difference for thousands of people."

Senate Health Committee Chair Kemp Hannon said, "Increasing organ donation in New York is critically important because organs are allocated on a regional basis and currently, our state has a very low percentage of people registered as donors. Modernizing the state's Donate Life Registry has been a Senate priority for several years, and I am pleased to see it is being launched. This and the other efforts announced today will truly save lives."

Senator David Carlucci said, "Making Lauren's Law permanent marks a milestone in the fight to increase organ donations in New York. I would especially like to commend Lauren Shields, a Hudson Valley resident who received a life-saving heart transplant at the age of 9, for her tireless work to see this day become a reality. Lauren's effort to make this change was inspirational and I am thankful to have been a part of it. Now we owe the thousands of other people in similar situations the chance to get the same help Lauren did. Making her idea permanent is an enormous step on that path and I commend Governor Cuomo for signing it into law."

Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard N. Gottfried said, "Signing up for the organ donor registry saves lives. It should be

simple and widely available, and expanding enrollment options will increase participation; Lauren's Law is a great example of how one person working for a good cause can make a difference."

Assemblyman Felix W. Ortiz said, "New York State now has a modern organ donation registry that will operate efficiently and promote donor consent so patients and their families will not be at risk of losing a lifesaving opportunity to receive a vital organ or tissue donation. New York has had one of the lowest donor designation rates in the United States. This action, in addition to making Lauren's Law permanent, takes New York in a new direction for the better."

New York Alliance for Donation Executive Director Aisha Tator said, "Donate Life New York State is joining forces with Governor Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health to solve the state's public health crisis of organ scarcity. Together, we will save the lives of those awaiting a transplant by reforming the New York State Donate Life Registry. Currently, New York's registry is ranked 51 out of 52 registries in the country for participation. That is going to change with this partnership. As collaborative partners and the state-appointed contractor for the new Donate Life New York State Registry, we will leverage state and community resources to encourage a greater culture of donation while making it simpler - and quicker - for New Yorkers to join the registry. We are grateful for Governor Cuomo's support and leadership in addressing this crisis, which will help save the lives of hundreds of New Yorkers who need a life-saving transplant."

Organ Donor Recipient and Organ Donation Advocate Lauren Shields said, "Today is an amazing day for New Yorkers. I am so grateful to Governor Cuomo for making Lauren's Law permanent in New York State. So many New Yorkers will be saved as a result. I am in awe this law will be in effect for generations to come and continue to help increase the number of New Yorkers

enrolling in the Donate Life Registry. In addition, I am so extremely thankful to the New York State Legislature, who continue to support the cause of donation, and especially Senator Carlucci and Assemblyman Ortiz for their tireless efforts."

New Yorkers can enroll in the NYS Donate Life Registry through the following online options:

- The NYS Department of Health website- health.ny.gov
- At the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles website - dmv.ny.gov
- At the NYS Board of Elections website - elections.ny.gov
- When applying for a New York City Identification Card - nyc.gov

###

Additional news available at www.governor.ny.gov
New York State | Executive Chamber | press.office@exec.ny.gov | 518.474.8418