



PRESS RELEASE

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HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON IMMUNOSUPPRESSIVE DRUG COVERAGE, A KEY LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY OF AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEPHROLOGY

Legislation would extend coverage of immunosuppressive drugs for kidney transplant patients

Washington, DC (January 8, 2020) — The House Energy and Commerce Committee is scheduled to hold a hearing on Wednesday, January 8, on the Comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act of 2019, advancing a long-standing legislative priority of the American Society of Nephrology.

The legislation, introduced in late December by Representative Ron Kind and Representative Michael Burgess, along with three other original sponsors, would allow Medicare to pay for immunosuppressive drugs for kidney transplant patients for the lifetime of the organ transplant. Medicare currently reimburses immunosuppressive drug coverage for only 36 months, leaving many individuals who cannot afford other coverage at risk of losing the transplanted kidney. The legislation is a top priority of ASN and has been the focus of several advocacy initiatives, including Kidney Community Advocacy Day convened by ASN in November 2019.

In response to the news, transplant nephrologist and ASN Policy and Advocacy Committee Chair Michelle Josephson, MD, FASN, said, "The introduction of the comprehensive Immunosuppressive Drug Coverage for Kidney Transplant Patients Act represents a crucial and common-sense change for kidney transplant patients. Kidney transplantation is the optimal therapy for most people with kidney failure, and a transplant is also the most cost-effective therapy for kidney failure."

Dr. Josephson continued, "I have cared for too many patients who have lost their kidney transplants because they could not afford their immunosuppressive medications after Medicare ceased coverage at 36 months, only to return to more-expensive dialysis. Sadly, this is also a familiar experience for most of my colleagues. I am grateful to Representatives Kind, Burgess, Eschoo, Smith, McEachin, and Herrera Beutler for their leadership on this critical issue and look forward to working with them and their colleagues in Congress to enact this important bill into law."

The bill is set to be discussed today, January 8, at a House Energy and Commerce hearing on member health care priorities. The legislation has received widespread, bipartisan support. During the signing ceremony for the Executive Order on Advancing American Kidney Health, Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar, II voiced his support of the policy. In 2019, the Department of Health and Human Services released two independent studies which found Medicare could save as much as \$300,000,000 over a 10-year window by enacting the policy.

Since 1966, ASN has been leading the fight to prevent, treat, and cure kidney diseases throughout the world by educating health professionals and scientists, advancing research and innovation, communicating new knowledge, and advocating for the highest quality care for patients. ASN has more than 21,000 members representing 131 countries. For more information, please visit www.asn-online.org or contact the society at 202-640-4660.

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