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[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Press Releases](#) > 2012 > Governor Christie Signs Legislation to Raise Awareness of the Importance of Lifesaving Organ Donation

Governor Christie Signs Legislation to Raise Awareness of the Importance of Lifesaving Organ Donation

Monday, April 23, 2012

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Legislation Designates April as Donate Life Month in New Jersey

Trenton, NJ – Acting to create greater public awareness about the lifesaving importance of organ donation, Governor Chris Christie today signed A-1265 establishing April as Donate Life Month in New Jersey. The legislation, signed following a tour of Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, requires that the State disseminate organ and tissue donation information to all State employees during the month of April, reminding them of the need for organ donors. Additionally, this law directs the Department of Treasury to encourage all businesses with contracts with the State to notify their employees of organ donation options through information and materials or through an awareness program.

"Establishing Donate Life Month is an opportunity for all residents to learn more about the critical importance of registering to become an organ donor," said Governor Christie. "By going through the simple process of becoming an organ donor, just one person can make a difference in as many as 50 lives. With nearly 5,000 New Jersey residents waiting to receive a life-saving organ transplant, being an organ donor is one of the most profound gifts to give someone else – a chance at a new, healthy life. And the gift of life is truly the greatest gift of all."

Nationally, there are more than 111,000 people waiting to receive a life-saving organ transplant. Every 10 minutes another name is added to the waiting list.

"I am extremely pleased to have the Governor and Health and Senior Services Commissioner Mary O'Dowd visit Newark Beth Israel Medical Center to highlight the importance of organ donation and the life-saving clinical success of our transplant program," said Barry H. Ostrowsky, President and CEO of Barnabas Health.

While New Jersey is making strides in organ donation, the state ranks 41 out of 50 states, with only 31% of residents registered organ and tissue donors.

"The need for organ transplants and the shortage of donors affects people of all ethnic backgrounds. Currently, more than half of the 5,000 people waiting for a life-saving organ transplant are minorities," said Health and Senior Services Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd. "As we celebrate Minority Health Month in New Jersey, it is important to recognize the need to increase the diversity of registered donors. Those waiting for a life-saving organ are more likely to receive transplants if more people from all backgrounds donate."

Anyone, regardless of age or medical history, can sign up to be a donor. Organ donor registration is available online or in-person at local Motor Vehicle Commission agencies. Residents can request a paper registration form at 1.800.742.7365. When registering in-person, the words "Organ Donor" will appear on the NJ driver license or non-driver identification card. When registering online or through paper registration, the designation will appear in the driver's record. Saying "yes" to organ donation is legal consent to the donation of organs and tissue for the purpose of transplantation or medical research.

For more details please visit www.state.nj.us/mvc/Licenses/organ_donor.htm

Last year alone, organ donors made more than 28,000 transplants possible according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.

To learn more about organ donation, please visit <http://www.donatelifenj.org>.

The legislation was sponsored by Senators Diane Allen (R-Burlington) and Joseph Vitale (D-Middlesex) and Assemblymembers Craig Coughlin (D-Middlesex), Daniel Benson (D-Mercer and Middlesex), and John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex).

A copy of the Donate Life Month proclamation can be found online [here](#).

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