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SB206 High School Organ Donation Education Bill is Gift of Life Michigan's top priority

The High School Organ Donation Education bill would recommend education about organ, eye, and tissue donation and the Donor Registry to all 9th graders in Michigan public schools. The bill is being reintroduced in the Senate by Sen. Joseph Bellino after [HB5174](#), sponsored by Rep Felicia Brabec, passed the House but did not pass the Senate in 2024.

The need for transplants in Michigan:

- Only 38% of new teen drivers register as organ donors, a lower rate than in other states
- 2,500 Michiganders are currently waiting for a life-saving organ
- 22,000 Michiganders suffer from end-stage renal failure, and many would benefit from a kidney transplant.
- Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and many other states have education mandates in public schools. Michigan does not.

Only 38% of new teen drivers register as organ donors. That low rate is less than other states get. It is not because Michigan teenagers are less generous, it is because of a lack of education. If Michigan could match the new driver registration rate of other states, we could see thousands more young people added annually to the Donor Registry. The best way to save the lives of the 2,500 people waiting for a transplant in Michigan is to grow the state's Donor Registry.

This bill would help Gift of Life's free education program get into more schools. This low teen registration rate is why Gift of Life is so heavily engaged in education programs like the [All of Us program](#). However, we can't get into all the schools. Out of more than 1,800 high schools in our state, we got into 509 last year. Having the state recommend education about organ donation and the donor registry would help Gift of Life's free program get into more schools.

Driver's Education is too little, too late for this type of education. Michigan law currently stipulates that a brief section on organ donation is to be presented in Segment Two of Driver's Education. There are several reasons driver's ed is no longer adequate.

- 1) A Michigan Secretary of State procedure change meant no new driver in Michigan is being educated about the Donor Registry before being asked to join it. Fixing this would be helpful. However, this legislation is a much bigger priority because 9th graders would receive an hour of education versus ten minutes in driver's education.
- 2) Fewer teens take Driver's Training. We need education about donation to be in the public schools because only 56% of Michigan teenagers had driver's licenses in 2021, down from 66% in the year 2000 and 80% in 1983. Under the current system, nearly half of Michigan teenagers have no opportunity to receive any education about organ donation and the Donor Registry.

There needs to be education about organ donation and the donor registry to address the racial health disparities in communities of color especially. African Americans disproportionately suffer from kidney failure and high blood pressure, which are leading causes of organ failure. For many communities concentrated in Detroit, where the cost of auto insurance is the highest in the nation, only a small percentage of teenagers take driver's education.

This legislation will help Gift of Life's free program to get to more students so they can make an informed decision about joining the Donor Registry.

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