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March 19, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Coburn, MD
United States Senate
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Boxer and Coburn:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for S. 330, the "HIV Organ Policy Equity (HOPE) Act." This legislation would make important, common-sense reforms to current organ transplant law by repealing the current ban on organ donations from HIV-positive donors to HIV-positive recipients and allowing research on transplant donations to HIV-positive patients, while, at the same time, maintaining the safety of the organ transplantation system.

Due to advances in HIV treatment and care, many HIV-infected people are living longer, with anti-retroviral drugs that can keep their viral loads at almost undetectable levels. As these patients age, however, the virus puts them at higher risk for organ failure, and they require organ transplants sooner than uninfected people with organ failure. With current wait times of over seven years in some parts of the country, many of these patients die while waiting for available organs. By updating the National Organ Transplant Act to reflect current medical and scientific understanding of HIV/AIDS, the HOPE Act would allow research on transplant donations from HIV-infected donors to HIV-infected recipients, and eventually, if proven safe and effective, would increase the availability of organs and access to transplantation for HIV-infected patients.

The HOPE Act is an important step forward in addressing the growing need among HIV-positive patients for organ transplantation. We applaud your leadership in sponsoring S. 330 and urge its approval by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

James L. Madara, MD