

September 9, 2019

The Honorable Bobby L. Rush  
2188 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Rush,

On behalf of the signatories below representing 3,800 scientists, we are pleased to see that legislation overseeing whole body donation programs is being proposed. For far too long, unethical and unlawful behavior has put all body donation programs at risk. Whole body donation programs supporting education, research, and therapeutic discovery are essential for pursuing advances in the science and practice of healthcare professions, and treatment of the patients they serve. Their contributions to medical education allow students in their early years to learn anatomy to be able to apply their knowledge in the clinical setting, such as during the performance of a patient physical examination. For practicing physicians, donors provide the opportunity to learn advanced surgical techniques, explore advanced anatomy, and discover therapeutic approaches that better serve their patients. Given the lack of consistent, enforceable legal guidance opportunists seeking monetary gain have threatened the longevity of these contributions to medical education.

Such legislation represents an important attempt to define and prosecute inappropriate behaviors and instill confidence in whole body donors and their families that their body or the body of their loved ones will be treated with respect and dignity. We are encouraged by the bill and [press release](#) from Congressman Rush's office, and we support the mission of developing appropriate legislation to enact these principles. Given these shared goals, we do have some concerns about the current bill and welcome the opportunity to work together on addressing these issues. Examples of our concerns are below:

First, we are concerned with the perception that this bill would legitimize for-profit body broker companies. Currently, the bill requires different entities to register if they handle human material without providing any guidance on who is entitled to do so. Thus, while the proposed legislation would provide a legal framework in which for-profit body broker companies could operate, they are equated with not-for-profit body donation programs operating within academic institutions, which historically and practically operate differently.

In addition, we are concerned about several procedural implications that this bill will have on the operation of body donation programs within academic institutions. Several examples are: requiring programs to source all medical records, which will increase administrative burden and in many cases be impossible, without necessarily increasing safety; onerous requirements for transportation of specimens which, again, will not

improve safety and which in one case actually put donor privacy at risk; and unintended consequences of the legislation for historical teaching collections, which play an important role in medical education.

We would like to reiterate our support for an appropriate legislative effort on these issues to ensure donors are being treated with dignity and respect. Their most precious gift is fundamental to providing the best patient care possible.

Sincerely,

American Association for Anatomy  
Human Anatomy and Physiology Society