

February 13, 2024

The Honorable Members of the House Appropriations Committee
Via Email

**Re: Please support adult pancreas transplantation Medicaid coverage for diabetic Virginians
House Item 288 #12h (Delaney) - DMAS**

Simultaneous Pancreas-Kidney Transplantation (SPK) is one of the most effective treatments for patients with insulin-dependent diabetes and end-stage renal disease (ESRD). SPK is a procedure that transplants both a kidney and pancreas, at the same time, into someone who has kidney failure related to insulin-dependent diabetes. The procedure provides significant survival and quality of life advantages – including fewer complications and lower ongoing drug, supply and medical costs – versus kidney-only transplants.

Unfortunately, Virginia Medicaid currently does not cover adult pancreas (and therefore SPK) transplantation. Medicaid in Virginia covers kidney for all eligible patients but does not cover pancreas transplants for patients age 21 and older. Patients who need SPK or a pancreas-only transplant and must forgo the procedure due to lack of coverage are at risk of several complications, including:

- Cardiovascular risk,
- Delayed wound healing,
- Loss of transplanted kidney function,
- Increased acuity during inpatient stays,
- Higher insulin needs and associated delivery supply costs, and
- Overall poorer outcomes.

Medicaid coverage for pancreas/SPK would lead to improved outcomes, lower long-term costs and higher quality of life for Virginia patients and families.

Medicare and most commercial plans do cover pancreas/SPK for patients of all ages (not only for those under 21). Since 2017, an average of 23 SPKs covered by commercial insurance or Medicare are performed in Virginia every year at the state's 4 hospital transplant centers: Inova Fairfax, Sentara Norfolk, UVA Health and VCU Health. *Lack of pancreas coverage means Virginia diabetic patients on Medicaid are significantly disadvantaged and at higher risk compared to patients covered by Medicare or commercial health insurance.*

Virginia Medicaid can add coverage of pancreas transplants at a reasonable funding level that would yield substantial health benefits to patients while saving the state and patients long-term care costs and burdens.

We support budget amendment request Item 288 #12h (Delaney) that would provide \$230,123 GF and \$1,649,199 NGF (federal match) over the biennium. This relatively modest amount would have outsized positive impact, covering approximately 13 patients statewide annually on the organ waitlist, including organ acquisition – and combined with existing coverage – hospitalization during the transplant phase, operating room fees, and postoperative medications. Over a 4-year waitlist period, an estimated 50 Medicaid patients statewide would benefit from SPK.

The undersigned coalition, which includes all of the Commonwealth’s hospital transplant centers, the American Diabetes Association, National Kidney Foundation and the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), respectfully urges you to support this budget request on behalf of Virginia’s diabetic patients.

In addition, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) supports coverage of all medically necessary treatments for people with type 1 diabetes including pancreas-kidney transplantation when appropriate.

Please contact Mark Hickman, Senior Director of State Government Relations for VCU Health (hickmanmp@vcu.edu), with any questions or concerns. Thank you for your service and consideration.

Sincerely,

Inova
Sentara Health
UVA Health
VCU Health

American Diabetes Association
National Kidney Foundation
United Network for Organ Sharing

Cc:

Mike Forehand, Vice President, Government and Community Affairs, Inova
Keenan Caldwell, Vice President, Government Relations and Public Policy, Sentara Health
Jennifer Siciliano, Chief External Affairs Officer, UVA Health
Karah Gunther, Vice President, Health Policy and External Affairs, VCU Health
Monica Billger, Director, State Government Affairs, American Diabetes Association
Valerie Rink, Advocacy Manager, NKF
Julie Nolan, Vice President, External Affairs, UNOS