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## **STATEMENT OF AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEPHROLOGY (ASN) PRESIDENT MARK E. ROSENBERG, MD, FASN, ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS) SECRETARY AZAR'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON IMMUNOSUPPRESSIVE COVERAGE FOR KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS**

**Washington, DC (March 15, 2019)** – On behalf of the more than 720,000 Americans with kidney failure whose lives depend on either a kidney transplant or dialysis to survive and their families, the 40 million Americans with kidney diseases, and the more than 20,000 ASN members who are physicians, scientists, nurses, and health professionals, ASN applauds the leadership of HHS Secretary Alex M. Azar, II, in confronting the issue of a three-year statutory restriction on Medicare coverage of immunosuppressant drugs following a kidney transplant.

In a House Appropriations' subcommittee hearing Wednesday, March 13, Secretary Azar stated that a preliminary office of the actuary analysis indicates that the savings generated by averting dialysis would be greater than the cost required to extend coverage for immunosuppressant drugs beyond its current three-year limitation. While noting that any potential savings would be "specific to the design of any actual policy," the Secretary underscored that HHS is "very focused on ways we can incentivize toward transplantation."

ASN has been advocating for Congress to extend this life-saving coverage for years. In fact, last month, representatives from the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) and other kidney community stakeholders discussed with Secretary Azar and other HHS leadership how helpful obtaining data regarding the potential cost or savings of extending immunosuppressive coverage beyond the three-year window would be.

The Secretary's willingness to engage Congress on Medicare coverage of immunosuppressants is most welcome. His comments came in response to a question from kidney care champion Representative Jaime Herrera-Beutler (WA-3), who highlighted that "often times we see people who lose their transplants get back on dialysis, because Medicare won't cover it. And the cost and quality of life issues are ridiculous: it's a lose-lose." ASN thanks Representative Herrera-Beutler for her tireless leadership in Congress on kidney issues.

For years, one of the chief challenges to passing legislation that extends lifetime Medicare coverage of immunosuppressive drugs for kidney transplant patients has been concerns regarding the cost of the legislation.

“Extending coverage of the immunosuppressant drugs could help patients avert dialysis in the future, supporting transplantation, which of course is a better health outcome at a lower cost,” Secretary Azar asserted.

ASN stands ready to assist Secretary Azar, Representative Herrera-Beutler, and other members of Congress to pass life-changing legislation to extend Medicare coverage of immunosuppressant coverage for patients with kidney transplants.

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The exchange took place in a hearing on the HHS budget request for FY 2020 before the House Appropriations’ Subcommittee on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, March 13, 2019.

*Since 1966, ASN has been leading the fight to prevent, treat, and cure kidney diseases throughout the world by educating health professionals and scientists, advancing research and innovation, communicating new knowledge, and advocating for the highest quality care for patients. ASN has more than 20,000 members representing 131 countries. For more information, please visit [www.asn-online.org](http://www.asn-online.org) or contact the society at 202-640-4660.*