

Hospitals sue over new national liver transplant policy

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Hospitals and patients have sued to block a new nationwide liver transplant policy that they say will waste viable livers, lead to fewer transplants and likely cause deaths.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the United Network for Organ Sharing hastily adopted the new policy and based it on faulty assumptions, according to the suit filed Monday in Atlanta [federal court](#).

At issue is a change in how patients are prioritized for [liver transplants](#). Where a patient lives affects whether he or she will get a timely [liver](#) transplant or die waiting. Some parts of the country have fewer available organs—and higher demand for them—than others.

The change set to go into effect on April 30 redraws the map that governs how donated livers are distributed.

United Network, a nonprofit that manages the U.S. organ transplant system and devised the new system, said in a statement the new policy "provides a fairer, more equitable system for all liver patients—no matter where they live—as they wait for a lifesaving transplant."

"This new policy is projected to reduce waitlist mortality by roughly 100 fewer deaths each year, will allow more children to receive life-saving transplants, and will correct an inequity that emerged over time within the old policy that led to unfair advantages and disadvantages based on where liver [transplant](#) recipients live," the statement said.

An email to Health and Human Services was not immediately returned.

U.S. Sens. Jerry Moran of Kansas and Roy Blunt of Missouri have said the new allocation system would disproportionately affect [patients](#) in rural

areas.

The lawsuit says it fails to account for differences in health care access across different regions and will reduce the number of transplants in states such as Georgia and Alabama that have among the highest number of high-risk communities.

The plaintiffs include Emory University Hospital in Georgia, Indiana University Health, Oregon Health & Science University, Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City and Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Tennessee.

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