Good morning, my name is Tonya Ingram. I am a poet, Cincinnati native, Bronx-bred introvert, Los Angeles resident, mental health advocate, cat auntie, Tom Hardy lover and “The Office” fanatic. And I need a kidney transplant.

I was diagnosed with Lupus at 22 years old, and as a result of that, in October 2018, I was diagnosed with end-stage kidney failure. My entire world collapsed.

Since then, I have lived on dialysis, just waiting to receive this new form of life. My health is my job. That is my main, primary focus. I have to be aware of the energy I have, I have to take all these medications, I am exhausted most days. I started telling my story, because I have to take my health into my own hands. I have to be my own advocate. I just knew that I would get more out of Instagram than from the actual health care system.

Last night I hooked myself up to a dialysis machine at 9 o’clock at night for the 8 hours it would take for a machine to clean my blood. At the age of 29 that’s a lot to deal with. And I still have to wait for an organ to be able to have a second chance at living a healthy and long life.

It is a very exhausting process waiting for a transplant. Because of my rare blood type, being on the list could mean I have to wait 10 years before I can receive a transplant. 10 years is a very long time for anyone, I can’t even think 10 years into the future right now, and to know that I won’t have a kidney until then is a very daunting and heavy thing. I know I’m not unique in that sense, that’s just what it is - it’s waiting. It’s hard to know that I’m waiting for life, I’m waiting to live.

And I’m standing alongside more than 100,000 Americans - most of whom are waiting for kidneys, though others need hearts, lungs, livers and other organs.

Imagine reading about a broken system when you are still waiting. To read investigative reporting about literally hundreds of organs being mishandled and lost in transit. Every one of those organs is a shot at life, and yet they are being treated like old luggage.

As I’ve learned, this is just one problem in a horribly broken organ donation system. To learn that 28,000 organs go transplanted every year - including more than 17,000 kidneys, almost 8,000 livers, 1,500 hearts, and 1,500 lungs - that is unconscionable.

The organ procurement organization that serves Los Angeles, where I live, is failing according to the federal government. In fact, it's one of the worst in the country. One analysis showed it only recovered 31 percent of potential organ donors. Audits in previous years found that LA's OPO has misspent taxpayer dollars on retreats to five-star hotels and Rose Bowl tickets. The CEO makes more than $900,000. Even still, the LA OPO has not lost its government contract. And it has five more years to go.

And so I wait. And I hope that it doesn't always have to be like this.

Sometimes when you're in this diagnosis it kind of feels like this is it and I will just be waiting forever until I'm no longer here, but I think with this reform, there is true hope - it's to say you will get it, you will get this organ, you will get this new chance at life, at continuing, knowing that the chapter doesn't have to end here, and there's a whole other story that you get to engage with because you now have a second chance at life.

My dream is to have a healthy body, a working kidney and a life that is mine. To Congress and the Biden Administration: please remember that I am a person with a story before kidney failure and I'll have a live after kidney failure.

Every other patient on the organ waiting list has their own story, their own life to live if the system will let them. We have so much to live for and that's why we're here fighting for this opportunity to do that, to live.

Please don't make us wait.

Thank you.