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Eye Bank Association of America

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Eye Bank Association of America's Paton Society Member Recognized for Dedication to Elevating Public Awareness of Corneal Donation Restrictions

Michael A. Puente, Jr., MD earns Crystal Cornea Award for his research and advocacy on lifting FDA's ban on corneal donation by men who have sex with men, and a career dedicated to ophthalmology and cornea transplantation innovation.

Washington, DC—The [Eye Bank Association of America](https://www.restoresight.org/) (EBAA), the world's oldest transplantation association and nationally-recognized accrediting and standards setting body for eye banks, today announced Dr. Michael A. Puente, Jr. as the recipient of 2025 [Crystal Cornea Award](#). The Crystal Cornea is presented to individuals or organizations from outside eye banking who, through their words and actions, elevate public awareness of corneal donation and transplantation.

"Dr. Puente's passion for supporting the LGBTQ+ community and tireless commitment to overturning the ban on MSM corneal donation is unmatched," said EBAA President & CEO, Kevin Corcoran. "His analysis of the number of donors lost each year because of FDA's five-year MSM exclusionary period raised considerable awareness and moved the needle forward on removing this restriction."

There are an estimated 12 million individuals around the world suffering from corneal blindness that could be corrected with a corneal transplant. There is no artificial cornea—the transplantation process depends on the priceless gift of donation from one human to another. Nearly anyone can be a cornea donor, as blood-type, eye color, vision quality, and age are not relevant to donation.

EBAA will present the 2025 Crystal Cornea Award to Dr. Puente, Jr., at the [2025 EBAA Annual Meeting](#) in San Diego during an awards luncheon on Friday, June 27—which is fittingly during Pride Month.

The Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA), established in 1961, is the oldest donation and transplantation association in the U.S. It sets medical standards, provides education, oversees professional certifications, and engages in advocacy to support eye donation, cornea transplantation, and research. Since EBAA's founding, member eye banks have provided tissue for nearly 2.5 million sight-restoring corneal transplants. To learn more, visit [restoresight.org](https://www.restoresight.org).