Holmberg, Jerry A (HHS/OPHS)

From: Adam Bink [adambink@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, June 08, 2010 10:23 AM
To: Holmberg, Jerry A (HHS/OPHS)
Subject: Public comment for HHS rule re MSM donors

Dear Dr. Holmberg,

I am pleased that the Health and Human Services Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability (ACBSA) is planning to review the Food and Drug Administrations (FDA) decades-long ban on blood donation by any man who has had sex with another man since 1977. I strongly urge the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to review its policy prohibiting gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM) from donating blood.

The FDAs current blood donor eligibility policies are largely inconsistent, imposing significantly less restrictive deferrals to heterosexual men and women who engage in high-risk sexual behavior, yet banning gay and bisexual men who are HIV-negative, consistently practice safe sex, or are in monogamous, long-term relationships. This policy reinforces inaccurate stereotypes about gay men and HIV, and results in a significant loss of healthy blood donors.

The advent of new HIV testing technologies, which can detect HIV directly and has a window period of only 9-11 days after infection, has provided scientific and technological reasons to reconsider the policy. In the face of chronic blood shortages in the nations blood supply, the unnecessary exclusion of large numbers of HIV-negative blood donors may harm patients in need of blood transfusions.

I join a growing consensus of voices who have called for reform of the FDAs donor eligibility policy. Many public health experts, the American Red Cross, the American Association of Blood Banks, Americas Blood Centers, and others have supported reforming the policy. Additionally, 18 U.S. Senators, as well as U.S. Representatives, have recently sent letters to the FDA calling for the long-standing policys review and modification.

It is both timely and necessary that an exhaustive review of alternative policies is conducted. I encourage Health and Human Services (HHS) and the FDA to act quickly to address our mutual concern for expanding the blood donor pool and ensuring the safety and adequacy of our nations blood supply.

Please consider this a public comment for submission.
Sincerely,

Adam Bink