Holmberg, Jerry A (HHS/OPHS)

From: Justin P. Nichols [justin@justinnichols.net]
Sent: Sunday, June 06, 2010 12:37 PM
To: Holmberg, Jerry A (HHS/OPHS)
Subject: Public Input - Blood Donation Regulations

Dr. Holmberg:

I am writing to comment on the committee's upcoming consideration on whether to permit gay men to donate blood and organs in the United States. I strongly urge the committee to recommend that the Department of Health and Human Services permanently lift the ban.

In the nearly 30 years since the Department instituted a rule prohibiting gay men from donating blood, there has been much progress in 1) HIV education and prevention, 2) the technology and testing of donated blood, and 3) reducing the illegitimate stigma of prohibiting gay men to donate their blood to the service of others.

I turned 17 on September 11, 2001. On that day, the first day on which I was eligible, I stood in line for hours in Dallas to donate my blood to the victims of the terrorist attacks. I was shocked when I was asked if I was gay but the clinician who was to take my blood. It was my first chance to, on some level, serve my country and I was turned away. It was my first encounter with discrimination, and I'll never forget it.

I realize why the original rules were set in place, and, granted, I wasn't old enough, or even alive, to understand the full impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980's. But, since that time I am confident that the gay community is just as healthy and safe than any other population, and there isn't any greater risk of permitting gay men to donate their organs and blood to save others' lives.

I hope that you'll share my comments with the committee, and I hope that the committee will bring the regulations regarding blood and organ donation into the 21st century. Truly, it is long over do.

Thank you for your work and for your service, and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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