

GREG STANTON
ARIZONA'S 9TH DISTRICT

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WASHINGTON OFFICE
128 CANNON BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-9888

DISTRICT OFFICE
2944 N. 44TH ST., STE. 150
PHOENIX, AZ 85018
(602) 956-2285

STANTON.HOUSE.GOV

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Ending Gay and Bisexual Men Blood Donation Ban to Meet Public Health Demands

Dear Vice President Pence:

As our nation faces a severe blood shortage in the midst of a global pandemic, I urge you to lift the ban on gay and bisexual men and allow all healthy Americans to donate blood. It is beyond the right time to lift this unnecessary prohibition and to screen based on science, not sexual orientation.

The need for blood donations is critical and will only become greater. Thousands of blood drives have been canceled, and there has been a massive drop in blood donations across the nation. In Arizona, Vitalant, which supplies blood for all of the hospitals in Maricopa County and 90 percent of the hospitals in the state, has experienced a 20 percent drop in blood donations overnight. Others are sounding the alarm. Just hours ago, the U.S. Surgeon General emphasized the need for blood donations and noted that one donation can save up to three lives. Arizona Governor Doug Ducey has similarly called upon residents to donate blood, recognizing that donated blood is an essential part of caring for patients. No one doubts the serious need for blood donations, yet an entire group of Americans is excluded from answering the call for help.

As it stands, sexually active gay and bisexual men are categorically banned from donating blood. The current policy of requiring men who have sex with men to be celibate for a year before they can donate cannot be justified with science. The American Red Cross has repeatedly advocated that blood donor eligibility be based on science and evidence, and not methods based upon sexual orientation. Due to great medical improvements in HIV detection, a population-based exclusion no longer makes scientific sense. Patient safety is of utmost importance, which is why a risk assessment should be done on an individual basis, rather than stigmatizing and shutting out an entire group of community members.

In this time when it is ever more important to make decisions based on sound science, I urge you to repeal this ban on blood donations. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Stanton".

Greg Stanton
Member of Congress