

GREG STANTON
ARIZONA'S 9TH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
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AND THE INTERNET

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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February 15, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Janet Woodcock, M.D.
Acting Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Jeffrey Zients
Coordinator, COVID-19 Response Team
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

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

Dear Secretary Becerra, Acting Commissioner Woodcock, and Mr. Zients,

Our nation faces a severe blood shortage that could be eased by lifting the anti-science deferral requirement on gay and bisexual men and allowing all healthy Americans to donate blood. I urge you to take action on this unnecessary prohibition.

The need for blood donations is critical and growing. Thousands of blood drives have been canceled due to the pandemic, and there has been a significant drop in blood donations across the nation. The American Red Cross declared a national blood crisis for the first time ever. In Arizona, the situation is particularly acute. Vitalant, which supplies blood for all the hospitals in Maricopa County and 90 percent of blood in the state, had historically low blood supplies in January and needs at least 600 donations per day to meet the need in Arizona. The Tucson Red Cross has only a one-day supply, in contrast to its usual five-day reserve.

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. This cannot be justified with science. Due to great medical improvements in HIV detection, an orientation-based exclusion no longer makes scientific sense. The American Red Cross has repeatedly advocated that blood donor eligibility be based on science and evidence—not on sexual orientation. Risk and behavior assessments

should be done on an individual basis to best protect patient safety, rather than by stigmatizing and shutting out an entire group of community members.

Throughout the pandemic, this Administration has urged the American people to follow the science and take precautions accordingly. Yet, on this critically important issue, the Administration continues to ignore science. I urge you to repeal this ban on blood donations immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Stanton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Stanton
Member of Congress