



## Joint Statement Regarding National Gay Blood Drive

July 2014

**Background:** *The event, designed by National Gay Blood Drive organizers, aims to increase attention on the Food and Drug Administration's lifetime blood donation deferral for men who have had sex with other men, or MSM, in the United States, which the National Gay Blood Drive organizers oppose as medically and scientifically unjustified.*

The safety of volunteer blood donors and the ultimate recipients of blood is our top priority. The National Gay Blood Drive is one way to raise awareness of the MSM issue. Blood donation eligibility in the U.S. is determined by the FDA and all blood centers are required to follow the rules and regulations set by the agency.

AABB, America's Blood Centers and the American Red Cross believe the current lifetime deferral for men who have had sex with other men should be modified and that donor deferral criteria should be made comparable with criteria for other behaviors that pose an increased risk for transmission of transfusion-transmitted infections.

We strongly support the use of rational, science-based deferral periods that are applied fairly and consistently among blood donors who engage in similar risk activities. We support ongoing efforts by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health to fund research to evaluate deferral policies and prevent potential risks to the blood supply.

We have long suggested the change to a one-year MSM deferral. A number of government-funded research efforts are underway to identify and measure the potential impact of any changes to the current deferral policy.