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## **Joint Statement on FDA Recommendation to Change MSM Deferral Policy**

**December 2014**

**AABB, America's Blood Centers and the American Red Cross issued the following statement regarding the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) recommendation to change blood donation deferral criteria for men who have had sex with other men (MSM):**

AABB, America's Blood Centers and the American Red Cross believe all potential blood donors should be treated with fairness, equality and respect, and that accurate donor histories and scientifically supported donor deferral criteria are critical to the continued safety of blood transfusion.

The FDA's decision to take steps to recommend a change in the blood donation deferral for men who have had sex with men (MSM) from a lifetime deferral to a one-year deferral is consistent with the position of our organizations that the current lifetime deferral is unwarranted. It is important to note that this process is just beginning and that the lifetime blood donation deferral for MSM is currently still in place. Blood centers comply with all FDA blood donation eligibility criteria. The process to change this will take time. We will review the draft guidance that is scheduled to issue in 2015, and will implement the guidance as soon as possible after it is finalized.

The top priority of AABB, America's Blood Centers and the American Red Cross is the safety of the ultimate recipients of blood and our volunteer blood donors. Our organizations strongly support the use of rational, scientifically-based deferral periods that are applied fairly and consistently among blood donors who engage in similar risk activities. We also support the advisory committee's recommendations for sustainable monitoring of changes in blood safety following implementation of a new deferral policy.

