



## Joint Statement Regarding “National Gay Blood Drive”

June 26, 2013

*AABB (formerly known as the American Association of Blood Banks), America’s Blood Centers and the American Red Cross issued the following statement regarding the “National Gay Blood Drive” scheduled for July 12. The event was designed by organizers to increase attention on the lifetime blood donation deferral for men who have had sex with other men (MSM):*

“While we appreciate the organizers’ interest in raising awareness of this issue, we are concerned that the event has the potential to disrupt blood center operations. Staff resources, which are already at capacity at many blood donation centers, will be needed to accommodate a larger-than-usual turnout of presenting donors who know they will be deferred under current eligibility guidelines.

Blood donation eligibility in the United States is determined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). AABB, America’s Blood Centers and the Red Cross believe the current lifetime deferral for men who have had sex with other men (MSM) should be modified and donor deferral criteria should be made comparable with criteria for other behaviors that pose an increased risk for transmission of transfusion-transmitted infections.

The U.S. suggested modification calls for a one-year MSM deferral. On June 22, 2013, Health Canada changed its MSM blood donor deferral period from a lifetime deferral to five years. However, with any ban, active MSMs will remain ineligible to donate blood.

We 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 support ongoing efforts by the Department of Health and Human Services and National Institutes of Health to fund research to evaluate deferral policies and prevent potential risks to the blood supply.

Maintaining a safe and available blood supply continues to be our highest priority.”