



Position Statement: Policy Proposals Containing Requirements for Directed or Autologous Blood Donations

The Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies (AABB) opposes laws and regulations that would interfere in patient care decisions by requiring blood collectors or hospitals to accommodate requests for directed or autologous blood donations. Directed donations involve a donor, often a family member or friend, giving blood for a particular patient before a procedure and are driven by the patient's preference rather than medical necessity. Autologous blood donation refers to an individual giving his or her own blood beforehand for his or her own use in a future medical procedure. These public policies are unnecessary, overly burdensome, and will not contribute to higher quality care.

- **The nation's blood supply is safe and effectively meets patients' needs.** Rigorous donor screening protocols and infectious disease testing ensure the safety and availability of blood for all patients. Most patients' blood needs, including those with complex blood type matching requirements, are met through community volunteer blood donations. More than 10.7 million red blood cells are transfused annually in the United States, and only 0.1% are medically necessary autologous or directed donations.
- **Medically indicated autologous and directed donations are already supported by blood collectors and hospitals throughout the United States.** Additionally, blood collectors and hospitals routinely work together to identify donors with compatible blood types that meet the unique transfusion needs of patients. For example, a physician may request a unit of blood from a donor to be designated for use in treating a specific patient with sickle cell disease. Blood collectors and hospitals have processes in place to evaluate requests and make medical decisions related to autologous or directed blood donations. Due to the potential safety and health risks from some directed donations, these processes often include consultations between patients' treating physicians and physicians at blood collectors.
- **Directed donations carry greater potential risks than standard voluntary donations.** For example, the risk of transfusion-transmitted infections is higher in directed units than for units collected from altruistic returning blood donors who are under no pressure to donate. Also, blood from closely related family member donors can impact patients' transplant eligibility and raises the risk of transfusion-associated graft versus host disease, which has a high mortality rate.
- **Policy mandates related to directed or autologous blood donations could lead to an increase in medically unwarranted directed or autologous blood donations.** This may adversely affect patient care and will create new burdens for providers and blood collectors.

AABB appreciates that policymakers want to ensure that patients have access to quality healthcare, including safe blood components. However, laws and regulations pertaining to directed or autologous blood donations are unnecessary and will not achieve that goal.

Rather, volunteer community blood donation forms the cornerstone of patients' access to safe blood. Therefore, we encourage policymakers to support patients who require life-saving blood transfusions by encouraging every eligible American to [schedule a donation appointment today](#).

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AABB is a not-for-profit association representing institutions and highly trained individuals involved in transfusion medicine and biotherapies. The association is committed to “improving lives by making transfusion medicine and biotherapies safe, available and effective worldwide.” AABB works toward this vision by developing and delivering standards, accreditation, and educational programs that focus on optimizing patient and donor care and safety. AABB individual membership includes physicians, nurses, scientists, researchers, administrators, medical technologists, and other health care providers dedicated to blood safety.